Leveraging archival skills and talent: Participating in (radical) collaboration across domains to achieve shared information management outcomes
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Abstract

Archival skills and expertise are invaluable in a digital world. Information management, especially for digital content, increasingly occurs at the intersection of a growing number of domains that include archives and records management. These affiliated fields are as engaged issues that archival community grapples with, though their mission statements and service models may seem very different. It is clear that these domains share common objectives and interests with ours, and there are surprisingly few examples that reflect real collaboration between our domain and theirs. In this context, collaboration means: "to rely on others to do agreed upon things for or in concert with you and to be relied upon to do agreed upon things for or in concert with others." How can the archival community highlight and promote are skills to participate more actively in the broad landscape of digital practice?

Radical Collaboration is a community-centered model for working together across domains that reflects the perspective of an archivist who is responsible for digital preservation in an academic library. The concept of Radical Collaboration means coming together across disparate, but engaged, domains in ways that are often unfamiliar or possibly uncomfortable to member organizations and individuals to identify and solve problems together, to achieve more together than we could separately. The model refers to collaboration as radical because so many references to collaboration fall so short of its intended meaning. Adding the modifier "radical" is meant to convey actually achieving collaboration.

The December 2018 volume of Research Library Issues (RLI) presents the Radical Collaboration model and explores examples from a range of perspectives, including an archivist's, with recommendations for moving forward together (available at: https://publications.arl.org/rli296/). The RLI volume focuses on radical collaboration for research data management. In a presentation at the 2020 Swiss Research Data Day (https://www.dlcm.ch/swiss-research-data-day-2020/programme/session/view_express_entity/592), I applied the Radical Collaboration model and the Digital Archives and Preservation (DAP) Framework to research data management. This presentation would share a brief overview of Radical Collaboration and the DAP Framework to explore how archivists can to "get out of the shadows!" Ideally, the presentation will lead to a discussion to consider how these models may enable archivists to shine in cross-domain efforts.

Slide notes

1. Title: Leveraging archival skills and talent: Participating in (radical) collaboration across domains to achieve shared information management outcomes

2. Topics
   Archives …
   Explore:
   Radical Collaboration model
   Digital Archives and Preservation (DAP) Framework
   DAP Framework highlighting archival roles and strengths
   Focus today: intersections between archives and other domains and professions

3. I am –
   - an archivist (and a data curator) responsible for digital preservation in a library
   - I work at the intersection of professions and domains engaged in digital practice
   - Think about what your answer would be to:
     - How do you identify?
     - I am …

4. Radical Collaboration
   …coming together
   across disparate, but engaged, domains
   in ways that are often unfamiliar
   or possibly uncomfortable…
   to achieve more together
   than we could separately

   RLI 296 – focus: research data management
   https://publications.arl.org/rli296/

   - When this special issue came out – a special issue of a popular publication in the library community - came out, I thought it would have a really big impact – that it would or could lead to discussions – that we could come together across the domains working on digital practice to try it out …

5. Table of contents (1)
   - Defining radical collaboration as a concept – scope, purpose, examples, principles
   - Some great examples in RLI 296 exploring radical collaboration

6. Table of contents (2)
   - Note the archives view – my thoughts on considerations, implications, challenges in digital practice, disambiguating digital archives and digital preservation roles and activities – we'll get to this in talking about the DAP – Digital Archives and Preservation – Framework

- Forward together – we'll talk about that later on …

7. Digital Practice roundtable
   - Why talk about radical collaboration, why think about the roundtable for digital practice?
   - Because in a digital working world we come together with shared responsibilities and not enough discussion about how we could or should work together
   - How do we play to our cumulative strengths?
   - The roundtable calls out examples of domains and examples of the strengths of those domains – to encourage discussion
   - You can see: archives, records management, digital preservation, oral history
   - It is essential to come to the table with sincere questions to better understand who's at the table and why, what that could mean for working together
   - It is equally essential to not prioritize advocating for your view, your domain when you're at the table …

8. Adapt Radical Candor …
   - Radical candor is a concept developed by Kim Scott – a great, brief video to learn more about radical candor
   - The purpose is to encourage engaging in truly constructive feedback – between colleagues, from supervisors to people who work for them, from employees to managers …
   - The four quadrants differentiate radical candor from things that are not radical candor
     o ruinous empathy – intending to be kind but not helping by not saying what's needed
     o manipulative insincerity – being nice instead of being helpful
     o challenge directly – dominating rather than coaching or helping
   - We should strive for radical candor – figuring out ways to say things that need to be said to help someone improve, advance, meet expectations …

9. To Radical Collaboration
   - Radical candor immediately got me thinking about radical collaboration
   - We need to collaborate on teams, across domains to accomplish our shared objectives
   - We say we collaborate but we don't really – that's the purpose of the radical collaboration model – to differentiate actual collaboration from things that are not that
   - It's an approach for encouraging collaborative work across domains
   - You might call it "candid collaboration"
   - Why radical? Because it would be a "radical" departure to actually collaborate
   - Using the same kind of quadrant, the model differentiates other things from collaboration
     o exclusive interactions – often 2 people decide to work on something – very common to identify as a problem solver – exclusive interactions lack the impact

- o passive sharing – telling people what you did after you did it is not collaborating
- o dominant coordination – dictating what will be done without discussion and feedback is not collaboration

10. Working Definitions
- So what is collaboration?
- Working definitions are a great way to develop a shared understanding – this is a technique used by EDISJ – Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice – efforts
- If we use the same words differently or refer to the same thing with different words without mapping out these core concepts, that creates ambiguity leading to unproductive discussions
- Working definitions make collaboration easier – necessary for teams, developing shared documents, working together – need to be aware of different meanings for information sharing

Collaboration: to rely on others to do agreed upon things for or in concert with you and to be relied upon to do agreed upon things for or in concert with others
Collaboration is **not**:
letting someone know what you did after you did it;
basic information sharing with no measurable impact; or
simply allowing someone to be present or observe without means to inform and influence

11. Common "collaboration" loop
- a funny example because it is so familiar!
- Shared by a favorite archivist – Barbara Craig
- We make a big deal about what we will do – radical collaboration is about allowing whoever wants to know about something you're working can from the idea through outcomes

12. Inclusion Framework
- Social and demographic inclusion - the common and necessary focus of EDISJ efforts
    - o i.e., not excluded based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, or on any other characteristic or preference
    - o **Showstopper**: first and foremost ensure that people are safe
- **Professional inclusion** – this is what we're talking about today and this is part of EDISJ for me
    - o **People from all impacted or related professions and domains are included openly and equitably**
    - o An example of an increasing challenge in US academic libraries
        - ▪ archivists are outnumbered by librarians in the US about 25 to 1

- - majority rules is very common everywhere - archives are increasingly being incorporated into special collections, not managed by archivists, archival positions are being replaced by library roles – it's challenging …
  - Technical inclusion – really important and a huge challenge but not the focus today
    - Technical is not limited to technological
    - Technology (skills, tools, capabilities) should be available to all

13. Digital Archives and Preservation (DAP) Framework
    - The DAP Framework is a worked example of mapping out roles for digital archives and digital preservation
    - My discussion of the archivist's perspective in the RLI special issue explores the ambiguity around archival terms
      - digital archives are not necessarily managing records but might be
      - digital archivists are not necessarily trained archivists but might be
      - digital archives is used interchangeably with digital preservation …

14. IT "Stack"
    - Another radical collaboration example that is central to working on digital practice is working with computer scientists and IT professionals.
    - What problem does the DAP Framework address?
      - Tendency to treat digital preservation as a technology-only or mostly problem
      - References to infrastructure tend to focus only on technical (aka technological) infrastructure
      - Common references to IT stack look like this image
      - Ambiguous use of terms: digital archives and digital preservation
    - Starting point: What would/should/could the "stack" look like for digital preservation management?

15. DAP Framework Components
    - We're going to walk through the components of the DAP Framework …
      - **Six layers:** Governance, Collections Scope , Acquisition, Workflows, Lifecycle Storage, Monitoring
      - **Human-Technology Continuum**: plus policy continuum that enables human technology-continuum
      - **Technological foundation**: sustainable and compliant infrastructure
      - **Collaborative services**: all activities that address current and long-term discovery, access, use
      - **Roles**: representing domain strengths to leverage in the digital roundtable

16. DAP "Stack" Layers: Governance
    - Includes: decision-making and policies, prioritizing, investments, managing DAP programs …

17. DAP "Stack" Layers : Collections Scope
- Includes: appraising digital content - in accordance with criteria, evolving the scope of archival collections, ensuring you acquire content

18. DAP "Stack" Layers : Acquisitions
- Includes: activities we use to bring in content, accessioning in accordance with established, defining and following procedures and practices - ensuring secure and controlled intake

19. DAP "Stack" Layers : Workflows
- Includes: the workflow steps humans follow, using tools that complete activities at our request or support or activities, workflows as the interaction of humans and tools, the evolution of workflows in response to organizational and technological change

20. DAP "Stack" Layers : Lifecycle Storage
- Includes: planning for long-term access, ensuring everyday protection, engaging in emergency preparedness, continually optimizing options for storing and managing content

21. DAP "Stack" Layers : Monitoring
- Includes: self-assessment and audit of digital practice, incremental improvement, demonstrating good practice, and harnessing technology …

22. DAP Framework: Human-tool Continuum
- Includes: partnering humans and technology, top-down: policies and decisions, bottom-up: solutions, rules applied up and down, cumulative documentation developed through collaboration, show how decisions are applied
- Builds on a sustainable, compliant technological foundation – absent the DAP Framework the foundation creeps up …

23. DAP Framework: partnering the "stacks" …
- Showing the connection to the IT "Stack" – supports more than DAP, humans rely upon

24. DAP Framework: Collaborative Services
- Includes current and long-term discovery, access, use and re-use
- build on DAP & IT stacks, should leverage strengths …
- absent the DAP framework, collaborative services start taking on DAP activities …

25. DAP Framework: Roles
- roles include creator: stewards; real-time: e.g., digital archives; over-time: digital preservation; users: current and future … active management: records management

and research data management – be ready to contribute archival and records management skills to new areas (e.g., retention for research data)

26. DAP Framework
- We're back to the full DAP Framework …
- Captures the roles and shared responsibilities

27. Research Data Management: RDM-DAP Framework
- A common example for archivists in digital practice: what role do we have in managing research data and the outcomes of research? The record of science …

28. RDM-DAP: Roles
- Pull our a few examples of the roles:
  - collection scope: creation, sharing content; what to preserve; how to preserve - shared responsibilities require collaboration
  - lifecycle storage: 10-year repository (e.g., digital records center); transfer, dissemination storage; preservation storge - during the 10-year period collaborate to determine long-term retention

29. Other DAP components for adapt for RDM
- Collaborative services
  - Compare service models – most domains identify as service-oriented but approaches differ
  - Identify common areas and objectives – look for opportunities, address challenges
- Human-tech continuum
  - Synchronize decision making – investments, regulation, integration, capacity building
  - Coordinate on tools and techniques – look for opportunities to adopt, adapt, co-develop
- Technology foundation
  - Extend collaboration to infrastructure development – evaluations, selection, use, maintenance
  - Be aware of technological vs technical – implications and limitations of overusing technical

30. Policy Continuum
    In a digital context, decisions need to be ready to manage actions
- illustrates necessary organizational and technological leg partnership
- demonstrates how policy enforcement and policy definition should work
- generally, technological decisions (rules, procedures) work up the continuum and organizational decisions (high-level policies, policy statements) work down – as the need for decisions arises, the type of decision needed helps to navigate the shared space of the continuum

31. Forward Together: examples (1)
- Be sure everyone who should be at the table is there – find out who should/could be there
- Come to the table with questions not answers – balance inquiry and advocacy
- Welcome unanticipated "guests" – ask questions to see how everyone fits
- If you are in the majority, consider what inclusion looks like – pause to orient new members, document and share outcomes and progress
- Ensure holistic communication for those not at the table – include wider community by sharing

32. Forward Together: examples (2)
Reset the table as needed – include different perspectives, shift to address emerging issues
- Never assume you're chairing even if you sent out the invite – who leads? For the whole initiative or for phase? Why?
- Prioritize common goals over any single "right" approach – identify related efforts that feed into the shared space, share updates
- Value your knowledge and that of others – bring your whole self and be courageous
- If you haven't learned something at the table, sit longer, ask more questions, and continue to listen…

33. Looking ahead
- Maximize opportunities and address challenges
- of engaging in radical collaboration
- to achieve sustainable digital content
- in an increasingly digital, virtual, global, and shared world

34. collaborative examples: take a look…
- iPres Working Group (iWG)
- Beyond the Repository Curatorial Toolkit
  - Uses radical collaboration, working definitions
  - Intended to help repositories use distributed digital preservation tools – take a look!

35. Resources
- McGovern, N.Y. "Radical Collaboration and Research Data Management: An Introduction," *Research Library Issues*, no. 296 (2018). https://doi.org/10.29242/rli.296.
- McGovern, N.Y. "Digital Archive and Preservation Framework (DAP)," *The Handbook of Archival Practice*. Edited by Patricia C. Franks. (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2021).
- McGovern, N.Y. "Archives, History, and Technology: Prologue and Possibilities for SAA and the Archival Community"
  - Example: roots and future of distributed digital practice

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https://americanarchivist.org/doi/abs/10.17723/0360-9081-81.1.9

36. Thank you!