



**Vanessa Reyes**  
Doctoral Student  
at  
Simmons College  
Graduate School of Library and  
Information Science  
Boston, MA

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# What Personal Information Management and Archiving Strategies Do People Use that Compare to the DCC Curation Model?

## Abstract

The digital era has redefined and reshaped the nature, scope, and use of personal information. Individuals are continuously collecting and storing an increasing volume of digital personal information in convenient portable devices. This qualitative research study investigated how academic users manage and archive their personal digital information. Specific focus was placed on learning how graduates of different disciplines managed their personal digital information. Twelve graduate students from diverse disciplines were interviewed, provided with a background questionnaire, and then placed into focus groups that matched their personal information management methods. One focus group discussion was guided by questions that made reference to a model the author created in a previous study of how graduate students of diverse disciplines manage their personal digital photographs; while the other group's discussion focused on questions that made reference to the Digital Curation Centre's DCC Lifecycle model.

## Problem Statement

People have been continuously collecting and storing an increasing volume of digital personal information. Studies conducted by The Microsoft Corporation titled MyLifeBits research project and The British Library's Digital Lives Project categorize the evolution of digital storage and capture the theoretical and practical aspects of how people archive and manage their digital memories. Additionally the Library of Congress (LC) has been involved in this area by educating the public on how to preserve their digital memories. To accomplish this, the LC developed a framework that is a standard practice for archiving files of most digital formats. However, to date, no empirical study has been conducted to explore how academic users manage their personal digital information, and to what extent their academic discipline impacts personal archiving strategies.

This study investigated how academic users manage and archive their personal digital information. The specific focus was on how graduates of different disciplines manage their personal digital information. The results of this study may develop an understanding of fundamental processes of personal digital information management and digital archiving by studying and comparing the participants' methods to the DCC Digital Curation Lifecycle Model as a theoretical framework. The DCC Digital Curation Lifecycle Model provides a graphic high-level overview of the stages required for successful curation and preservation of data created by UK's digital curation center. The model can be used to plan activities in an organization or consortium to insure that all necessary stages are undertaken, in the correct sequence. The model enables digital files' functionality to be mapped; defines roles and responsibilities to build a framework of standards and technologies. It can be used in the process of identifying additional steps, which may be required, or actions which are not required by certain situations or disciplines, to make sure the processes and policies are adequately documented. Using this structure will allow information professionals to have an overview of the stages required for successful curation and preservation of digital data through personal information management.

## Research Questions

1. How do graduate students manage their digital information?
2. What are their preferred personal information management methods?
3. What methods do students use that can be matched to the model I created, and how will the model need to be revised to include practices not previously accounted for?
4. What methods do students use that are similar to the DCC Curation Model?

## Methodology

The current study investigated how academic users manage and archive their digital information. There has been some previous work done on how people manage digital belongings, but not how graduate students manage their digital information. This study used a qualitative research method to identify whether academic users' methods were similar to a model previously created based on personal digital photo archiving methods or to the UK's Digital Curation Center's Lifecycle Model.

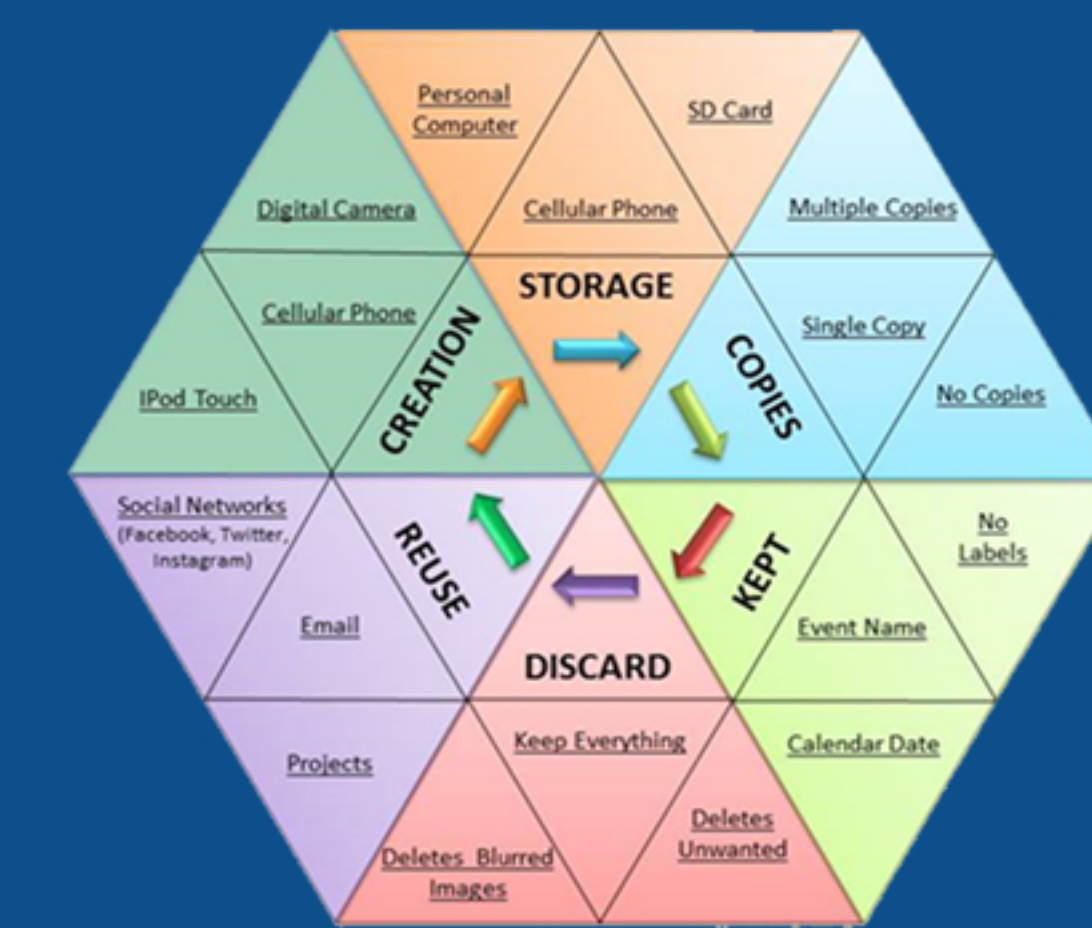


Figure 1: The hexagon chart depicts the main process participants reported using when managing their personal digital information. The model starts with the action of creation followed by storage, copies made, how information is kept, what gets discard, and what information is reused. Under each of these categories are the three most reported answers.

## Results



Personal Digital Information Management Cycle  
Created by: Vanessa Reyes

Figure1: The hexagon chart depicts the main processes participants reported using when managing their personal digital photographs. This model was created using results from my first study and can be interpreted as a model that explains the cycle in which personal digital information is created, stored, copied, reused and discarded. Under each of these categories a list of the three most reported answers are provided from my previous study. Above these categories in yellow are the new additions from the current study's results based on reported answers from the focus group, interviews, and survey responses.

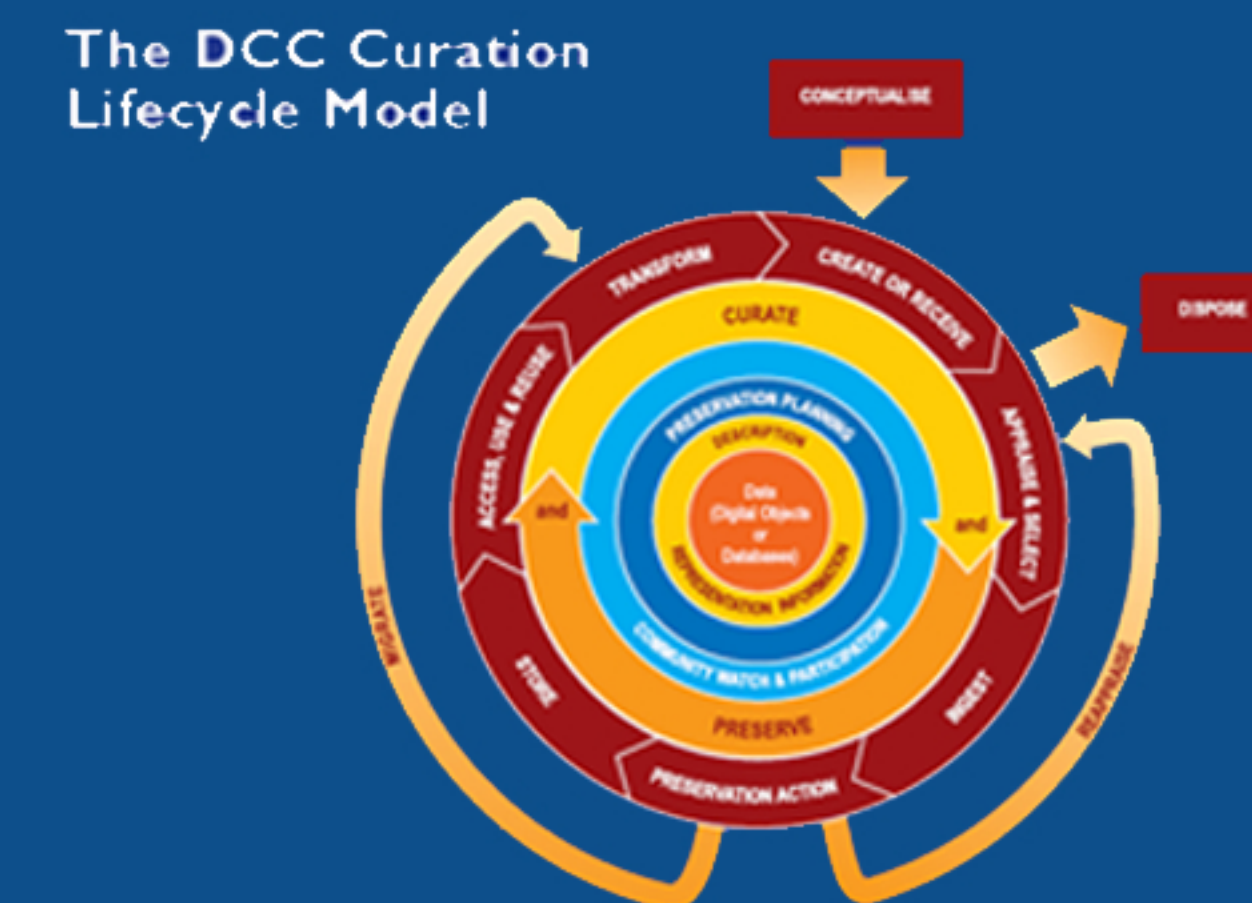
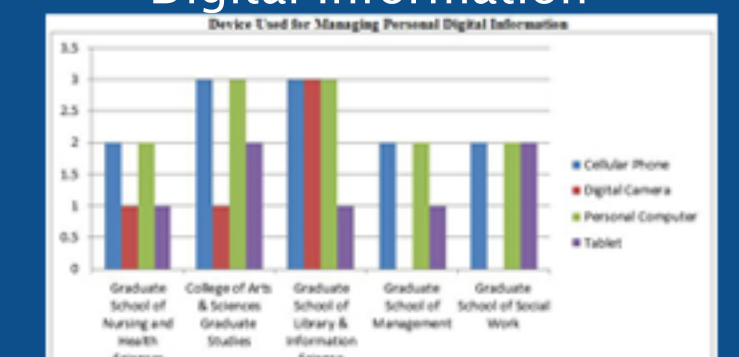


Figure 2: The Curation Lifecycle also known as The DCC Curation Lifecycle Model provides a graphical high-level overview of the stages required for successful curation and preservation of data Created by UK's digital curation center. The model can be used to plan activities within an organization or consortium to ensure that all necessary stages are undertaken, in the correct sequence. The model also enables granular functionality to be mapped against it; define roles and responsibilities, in order to build facilitate a framework of standards and technologies to implement. It can help with the process of identifying additional steps, which may be required, or actions which are not required by certain situations or disciplines, and ensuring that processes and policies are adequately documented.

## Conclusions

Twelve participants provided ample material for constructing a model of how personal digital information was being managed among the population that was tested. These findings provided insight on how this particular group of students' disciplines may have had an influence on the way they manage their personal digital information. During the study participants had no difficulties in the process of answering survey, and interview questions. For the focus groups there needed to be an equal number of six members per group, yet due to the participant's schedules only four students were able to participate in the group that focused on the model previously created and three students in the DCC model focus group. Although these were smaller groups than anticipated, the participants carried on a lively discussion, where they answered each other's responses and even expressed concerns in times of disagreement. Furthermore, there were no differences from either of the students' answers in the

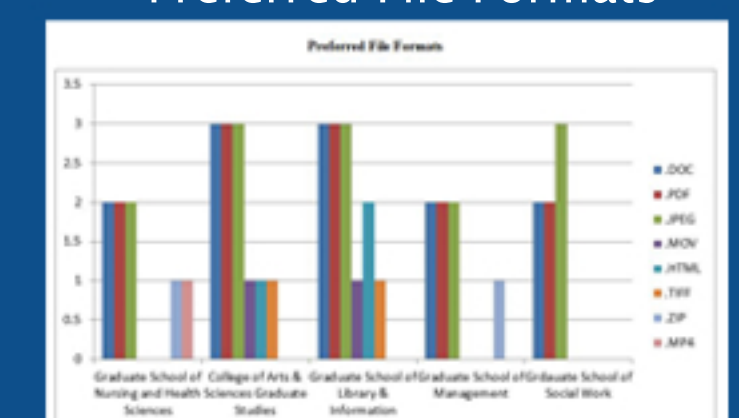
### Devices Used for Managing Personal Digital Information



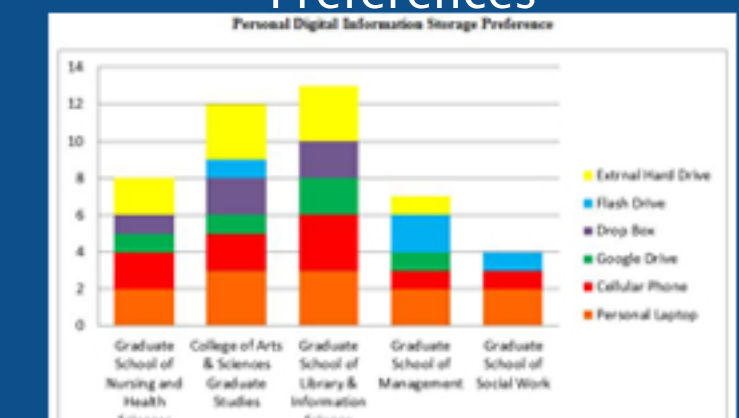
### Social Media Sites Where Personal Digital Information is Shared



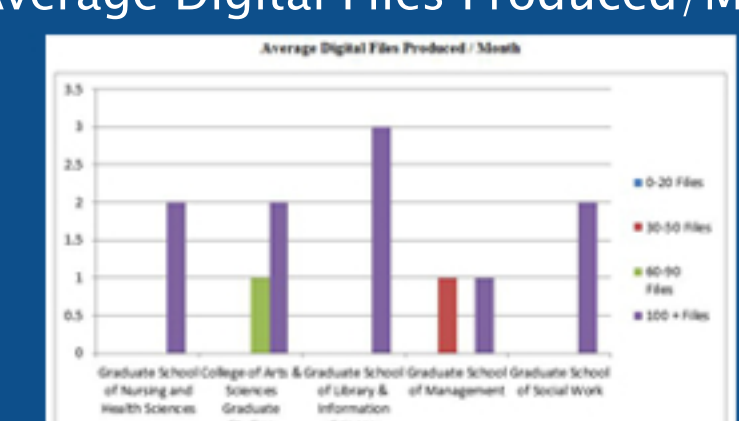
### Preferred File Formats



### Personal Digital Information Storage Preferences



### Average Digital Files Produced/Month



### References Cited

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