

Disciplining Digital Curation? What it Means to be an Emerging Field

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Abstract: Digital curation is maturing within the information disciplines and becoming increasingly embedded in practice. Although there is visible growth in the educational programs offering coursework in digital curation, and an increase in professional roles requiring such competencies, it is still uncertain how the transmission of this knowledge set fits within the Archival, Library, and Information Science curricula. How this area is perceived by its community, and where it is positioned within higher education and practice, determines important features of the educational landscape of digital curation knowledge, practices, and skills.

In this presentation I discuss what it means to be an emerging field and the implications of the potential growth of a digital curation discipline for Archival education. I present findings from my dissertation research, which investigates whether digital curation, broadly conceived, is emerging as a discipline in its own right. This research employs a qualitative multimethod research design combining content analysis of published digital curation literature and interviews with individuals engaged in the area. This study focuses on identifying themes that emerge from the academic discourse and understanding the level of consensus among educators, practitioners, and researchers about how they view this domain.

Although my research suggests that digital curation has not developed into an autonomous discipline, the area does meet several criteria to indicate its capacity for differentiation. Accompanying this evident maturation of digital curation are educational complexities and opportunities which necessitate a concerted effort within and among Archival Studies, Library and Information Science, and other fields.

About the author:

Patricia Condon is a doctoral candidate in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Simmons College in Boston, Massachusetts. Patti holds an MLIS and MA in Anthropology from The University of Southern Mississippi, and a BA in Anthropology/International Affairs from the University of New Hampshire.

Patti has fifteen years experience researching, teaching, and working in the information disciplines, including professional positions in archives, academic libraries, and publication. Presently, Patti serves as an adjunct instructor for the Digital Stewardship course in GSLIS at

Simmons. Her current research focuses on two main areas: the curation and stewardship of digital materials in archives and libraries; and the significance of place and sense of place in archives, community collections, and cultural heritage.