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INST641: Digital Curation

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Planning Policy Report

As learning professionals in the MLIS community who all create and manage digital content, it is imperative that we have a clear and concise digital curation policy in place for our project endeavors. This policy planning report outlines a commitment to preserving and maintaining the authenticity, integrity, and accessibility of Sámi American digital assets, as well as the methods by which indigenous and allied administrators collect, store, and share them within the native community and to the general public. Before I outline my policy plans in detail it is important to summarize some important historical situations that the Sámi experienced to better understand the importance of a project such as this one.

Most nations have been drawn and bordered using fabricated notions of Nationness, redistributed, and renamed by its conquerors, and traded and bought by its elitist governments. In true colonist fashion, Sápmi and its Sámi caretakers have been added to the sickening multigenerational Indigenous stories, not unlike the Natives of Australia and those Native to American and Canada. Sámi land was maliciously stripped of their original names and cultural significance and placed under the countries we now collectively call Scandinavia. (Bjørklund 2003) In the words of a British - Czech philosopher and social anthropologist Ernest Gellner, “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist. (Gellner 1983:169) Before the ideas of landownership existed and Scandinavian countries became sovereign nations, borders were not engrained in their citizens minds. However, the raise of nationalism compelled lands to be renamed in the image of the colonial country’s meticulously constructed national culture.

With Scandinavian nationalism in mind then, the Sámi national movement must also be defined according to its political positioning in the Scandinavian law. In 1977, The Swedish government for the first time, acknowledged the Sámi as a minority people. Norway followed in 1990, and then Finland in 1995. (Chen 2021:5) At this juncture, it is important to point out that Russia has never recognized Sámi parliament claiming to represent the Sámi living in the Kola Peninsula till today nor has Russia amended its constitution to include the Sámi as a recognized minority with rights: Sámi are invisible and considered effectively erased in elite minds of the Soviet Union.

These small victories in the previously mentioned Scandinavian countries did not come without tumultuous political debate and continued Sámi shaming and oppression. Projects like this are being created and supported to better illustrate the significant cultural heritage items that should be owned and controlled by the Sámi people and the legacy that must be preserved for the future of their culture and history. This project deals with the memory of a nation not yet realized when Sámi were forced to flee to the United States due to the conformity and oppression strategies being waged against them.

This document serves as a mockup of my digital curation policy, outlining the strategies I would employ with the help of a collective body of experts both institutional and community based to ensure that Sámi American digital content is properly transformed, curated, and preserved. This policy’s planning strategy focused on building out a structure inspired by the Sípnuuk (Storage Basket in Karuk) project, Ara Irititja and The Indigenous Knowledge Management System (IKMS) in South Africa. To understand why these particular digital archive projects were used in this project for Sámi American community, it is important to understand the reasons why the projects themselves were created.

Sípnuuk is a Digital Library, Archives, and Museum that began in 2012 as a place for the indigenous people of Karuk in California, United States to preserve their cultural heritage, decolonize the biased depictions and interpretations of their culture, and to embrace the right of self-determinism without Eurocentric established cultural systems. This is a very important part of indigenous rights and self-determinism in America which Sámi Americans struggle to attain in their homeland and aboard. Ara Irititja is a digital repatriation project that was initiated in 1994 by the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people of Central Australia, in collaboration with the South Australian Museum and other cultural institutions.

Sámi people and Sámi Americans are currently seeing encouraging and historical recognition of their indigenous status and ownership through repatriation efforts both in America and in some countries like Finland and Norway more recently. There is still so much to do and many more items to be given back to these communities. The Indigenous Knowledge Management System (IKMS) in South Africa is a digital preservation system developed by the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in collaboration with Indigenous communities. This system represents the ability for a government to provide opportunities and funding for indigenous communities to protect and preserve their digitized cultural heritage. Reading and researching this system gave me hope in the future for indigenous control and access on digitally progressive platforms like the famous Mutuku project.

The Mukurtu project is well known in the MILS, curation, and information humanities as the model of allyship, self-determination, indigenous sovereignty as well as a platform that is customizable to many indigenous communities for managing and sharing digital materials in adherence to cultural protocols originally setup by the Warumungu Aboriginal community. This system also shared many details to those inspired by and spurred into action from their efforts. I was such an inspired individual and their work helped my own in countless ways. The Sámi American digital archive or Saiida aims to preserve data-based digital resources. Digital resource types accepted by the Saiida project include, but are not limited to:

-  Text documents (plain and marked-up)

-  Still Image collections

- Physical heritage items transformed into 3d images

-  Datasets (data designed for use in spreadsheets, databases, and statistical packages)

-  Digital audio recordings

-  Digital moving image recordings

-  GIS

-  Virtual reality

-  Websites

Strategies for Preserving and Curating Digital Content: My digital curation policy aims to establish best practices for transforming, preserving, and curating Sámi American digital content. These practices include the following:

Storage and Backup: We will maintain a subscription cloud-based storage of our digital content to ensure that it remains accessible in the event of a disaster or technological failure. The decision to do cloud-based storage like Google Drive service for non-profits versus a blockchain is because of the amount of audio and visual files anticipated for this Sámi American archive in addition to many digitized museum items. In addition, there is also the financial challenge when creating and maintaining an online community archive platform especially one that has a hard time being recognized as indigenous in both the United States as well as in their historical Scandinavian homelands.

Metadata and Documentation: We will create and maintain detailed documentation and metadata for our digital content to ensure that it remains understandable and accessible over time. Metadata that is coded to prevent encroachment on any individuals PII will be stored on hard drive disks and kept with a select number of administrators with proper respect given to PII of others.

Digital Preservation: I along with team members will employ digital preservation techniques to ensure that the digital content for the Sámi American community remains usable and accessible over the long term. An example would be to use the most widely supported format of a media file like MP4 for videos while also staying abreast of the most current technological advancements for the time when migration will be required. Maintaining financial stability through grant applications and government programs will also aid in maintain our work for this community’s online archive and its ultimate ability to stand the test of time.

Selection and Appraisal: We will periodically review our digital content to determine which materials should be retained and preserved for future use. By being in constant communication with the Sámi American community, we hope to ensure the selection process remains lead by the communities’ cultural values and beliefs. One way we can conduct appraisals one a tile or item has been digitized and archived on the online platform is by programing periodical verification of the files through a checksum. A checksum is a value that is generated based on the contents of the file, and it can be used to verify that the file has not been altered in any way.

Access and Use: We will ensure that our digital content remains accessible to users, regardless of their geographic location, and that it is available in formats that are appropriate for the intended use. However as with many but not all indigenous communities, access will be decided based on cultural values, in this case, the Sámi American perspective of ownership and access based on their societal systems in collaboration with myself and other advising data curation and MILS professional allies.

Methods for Opting In/Out of Data Curation: We recognize that individuals may have different preferences and concerns regarding the curation of their digital content. Therefore, we will provide clear and concise opt-in and opt-out options for data curation. Individuals will have the option to opt-in or opt-out of data curation, depending on their personal preferences and beliefs. We will work to make sure that no PII is recorded for those that choose to not have their data information recorded in any way and to provide ways of coding their PII if approved. This information will be stored in separated hard drives that will not be accessible to the general staff or public but only to selected administrators with the permission of the individual.

Technological Requirements for Digital Curation Policy: To effectively implement this digital curation policy, we will require the following technological tools:

Digital Storage and Backup: We will use secure, cloud-based storage solutions to maintain our digital content. As of the writing of this policy the two options would be for either IDrive or Google Drive’s free or financially aided non-profit service plans.

Metadata and Documentation: We will use metadata management software such as [CONTENTdm](https://www.oclc.org/en/contentdm.html) which is well known for its user-friendly interface and use in the library community to create and maintain detailed documentation and metadata for our digital content.

Digital Preservation: We will employ a digital preservation software that was made for indigenous communities and their access needs, Mukurtu CMS. Mukurtu CMS is a free and open-source digital preservation software designed specifically for indigenous communities and has been used by many with wonderful results. Mukurtu CMS includes features such as customizable cultural protocols, community-led metadata management, and access control options that can be tailored to the needs of the unique needs Sámi American community. Most importantly Mukurtu allows communities to manage, preserve, and share their digital heritage in a culturally sensitive way where others might not grant such customizable freedom. By employing Mukurtu CMS we (I and a collaborative team) hope to ensure that Sámi American digital content remains usable and accessible to the community and general public over the long term for decades to come.

Methods of Proposing and Enacting Changes to the Digital Curation Policy Plan:

Our digital curation policy will be a living document that is periodically reviewed and updated as needed. Changes to the policy can be proposed by any member of the organization and will be reviewed by a designated committee made up of live long MILS learners and respected and appointed Sámi American community members. Once a proposed change has been approved, it will be added to the policy and communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

To measure the success of our digital curation policy, we will use the following metrics: Percentage of Digital Content Preserved: We will aim to preserve at least 90% of our digital content. We are also striving to provide user satisfaction where we will survey Sámi American community users to gauge their satisfaction with the accessibility and usability of our digital content. We will create a separate survey for the general public based on the approval of the Sámi American community representatives. These surveys will be taken to a scheduled meeting with the elected committee and discussed in-depth to aid in the shaping of our improvement strategies.

Compliance with Legal Requirements: A key consideration for any digital archive is the legal requirements surrounding data privacy and protection. At the one-year mark, the Siida digital archive must review its policies to ensure compliance with any new legal requirements that have arisen. This may include updating policies related to data encryption, access controls, and user privacy. Failure to do so could result in the archive being in violation of legal requirements, leading to reputational damage and legal consequences. We, as a collaborating team, will ensure that our digital curation policy remains compliant with all relevant legal requirements in the United States as well as in Scandinavia by consulting with lawyers specializing fields of intellectual property law or technology law, more specifically privacy law, copyright law, and digital media law.

Technological Obsolescence: Technological obsolescence is another consideration that must be accounted for in the curation policy. At the one-year mark, the archive will review its technological infrastructure to ensure that it remains current and effective. This may include upgrading hardware, updating software, and improving the user interface to ensure that the platform remains accessible and user-friendly. Of course, this effort will need to be funded through constant application and occasion award of grants and government funding. However, failure to do so could result in the platform becoming obsolete, rendering the information contained within it inaccessible to future generations which defeats the purpose and the important mission of such a project. We will monitor our technological tools to ensure that they remain up-to-date and effective with our own talent and resources.

Intellectual Property: Intellectual property is also a crucial aspect of any digital archive. The archive must be transparent about ownership and attribution of cultural artifacts and must develop policies that protect the intellectual property rights of both individuals and institutions. At the one-year mark, the archive must review its policies to ensure that they are in line with any shifts in individual or institutional attitudes towards the sharing and ownership of cultural artifacts. This may include updating policies related to copyright, fair use, and the public domain. We will monitor shifts in concepts of intellectual property at the individual and institutional level and adjust our policy as needed in consultation with the previously mentioned lawyers.

At the five-year mark, the Sámi American archive must conduct a comprehensive review of its curation policies to evaluate their effectiveness. This review must include an assessment of the archive's compliance with any new legal requirements, an evaluation of the archive's technological infrastructure to address any potential issues with obsolescence, and a review of the archive's intellectual property policies to ensure that they align with any shifts in individual or institutional attitudes towards intellectual property. The review must also include an assessment of the archive's user engagement metrics to determine the effectiveness of the platform's outreach efforts.

One of the most important considerations for any digital archive is user engagement. The archive must also evaluate its outreach efforts to ensure that the platform is reaching its target audience effectively. This may include reviewing social media engagement metrics, evaluating the effectiveness of advertising campaigns, and assessing user feedback to identify areas for improvement. Lastly, the archive will need to reconsider the impact of cultural shifts on user engagement and adapt its policies accordingly.

Finally, at the ten-year mark, the archive must take stock of its achievements and consider any necessary improvements to its curation policies. This may include conducting a thorough review of its legal compliance, technological infrastructure, intellectual property policies, and user engagement metrics. The archive must also prioritize the long-term preservation of its digital assets by considering the most up-to-date methods for data storage and backup. Additionally, the archive must consider any significant shifts in cultural attitudes and adapt its policies accordingly to remain relevant and effective.

In conclusion, our digital curation policy outlines our commitment to preserving and maintaining the authenticity, integrity, and accessibility of Sámi American digital assets and cultural heritage. By employing best practices for digital preservation, offering clear opt-in and opt-out options for data curation, using appropriate technological tools, we hope to provide a legacy for the future of Sámi peoples and foster sensitivity and respect for indigenous cultural practice and beliefs and their future generations.

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