No Gods, No Masters:
Sustaining Community Work without Funding or Staff

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Thanks for being here!

- BDAWG: A community with no funding and limited staff
- Characteristics & benefits of community-led projects and documentation
- BDAWG in 2020
Introduction to BDAWG

Self-organized group came from several semi and formal meetings dating back to 2015.

- Survey of born-digital practices in place at cultural heritage institutions (2015)
- A breakout session on access at BitCurator Users Forum 2016
- Electronic Records Section Breakout @ SAA 2016
- Born-digital access bootcamps
- DLF Working Lunch @ DLF Forum 2017

Further inspiration: Participatory Archival Research and Development: The Born-Digital Access Initiative
BDAWG Initial Structure: 2017-2019

Born-Digital Access Working Group

- Access Practices & Outreach sub-group
- Levels of Access sub-group
  - Accessibility
  - Description
  - Security
    - Tools
  - Researcher Support & Discovery
Levels of Access Project

**First Draft Completed**
April 2018

**May - July 2018**
Paired peer review process - areas reviewed by other working group members

**Fall 2018**
Revisions made from feedback

**BitCurator Users Forum and DLF Forum**
Led sessions to solicit community feedback

**2019**
Revisions Revised based on feedback

**Nov 2019**
Open Comment Period
After making revisions based on feedback received at BitCurator and DLF forums, we shared across many communities for a month-long open comment period.

**Feb 2020**
Final document publicly released
Characteristics of Community-Led Projects

- No direct funding and participation is usually voluntary
- Projects are collaborations between many institutions
- Participants determine the structure and administration of the project
- They address issues that are difficult (or impossible) to overcome alone
- All community members have access to participation and feedback
- Owned by the community
- Community-centered means more labor in relationship-building and feedback processes
Benefits of Community-Led Projects

- Collaboration across many different geographies and institutional types
- Participation at different levels and institutional types
- Sometimes fulfills a need that the member’s home institution can’t
- Fulfilling to work on a chosen/ “passion” project
- Redefines traditional ideas of ownership
Why Sustain Anything at All?

- Without users there is really no point in sustaining anything. So we will sustain this document as long as it has a user community.
- Sunsetting is always an option
“Our sustainability plan is lightweight, and we expect that it will evolve as members of the community interact with this document, and as methods and ideas about access to born-digital materials change.”

- DLF will serve as its institutional home
- BDAWG will serve as this document’s immediate maintainers
- Documentation hosted in Google Drive and OSF
- Feedback can be submitted to the current BDAWG chairs
What the Sustainability Plan Means

- Sustainability of the Levels and other future resources depends on sustainability of community
- BDAWG will sunset the Levels when/if the document becomes irrelevant or the community can no longer support for any reason
- Community’s responsibility to communicate if they no longer support document updates
- Need to be intentional about measuring how and how often Levels are used
How We’ll Sustain the Community and the Levels

- Growing membership through effective communications and outreach that tells people:
  - What the group does
  - Why it’s rewarding to join the community
  - How one can get involved: specific activities to join in on right now
- Get people outside of group membership to buy-in and use the levels
- Put processes in place for group leadership development and leadership transitions
  - Coordinator responsibilities
  - Coordinator recruitment process
  - Intentional transition and hand-off period
BDAWG Current Structure: 2020

- DLF
- Born-Digital Access Working Group
  - Donor Relations
  - Legal due diligence
  - Documenting Access Methods
  - Ideal Systems
  - Values

11 other cool working groups!
How to Find Us

You can read anything we publish at:

https://osf.io/hqmy4/

And here’s how to join us:

tinyurl.com/BDAWGGG

We aspire to build out our wiki:

https://wiki.diglib.org/Born-Digital_Access_Working_Group
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