Digital Darwinism

A Brief Survival Guide to Personal Information Management

By Jonathan Harford, "Floppy Disks In The Street", http://www.flickr.com/photos/jonathanharford/514919834/

What is Personal Information Management (PIM)?

Individuals are unique and so are their information needs and preferences. As a response, PIM is a developing area of interest among archivists and information professionals as advocates for the preservation and retrieval of information created, collected and managed by individuals. Since different kinds of information are created, acquired and managed differently, analysis is devoted to each of three broad categories: **Works & Assets**, **Resources** and **Communication**. Tips and tools for organizing, managing and preserving information across distributed digital environments are offered.

Preserve your files with 3-2-1

For minimal risk of data loss:

3 copies (1 primary + 2 backups) across

2 formats (hard drive + mobile drives) with

1 format stored offsite, or cloud storage

Backup Overview from the *American Society of Media Photographers*

By avaragado from Cambridge (Forty years of removable storage) [CC-BY-2.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0)], via Wikimedia Commons

Works & Assets

SCOPE: Information created or acquired by individuals within the course of their professional, academic and private activities. This includes self-created information such as notes, drafts, pre-prints, final drafts, software session files, raw and processed data, digital photos, audio and video recordings; and acquired documents such as receipts, legal documents, and certificates.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: Documents and assets generally have an active period for which they are retrieved frequently as works in progress, followed by a static period for which they are stored (archived) as part of the legacy of one's work and life. Works and assets are often distributed across multiple storage media and are subject to loss due to hardware failure, human error or technological obsolescence.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGY: Consider your work habits. Do you work from multiple locations/computers? Are your documents created across multiple technologies such as smart phones, cameras or audio/video equipment? Is your work to be shared? If you answered yes to any of these questions, saving your work to a cloud storage server (see Tools below) will offer you the flexibility you require.

PRESERVATION STRATEGIES: 1) Documents you create have dynamic lifecycles. Incremental back-ups protect working drafts. Use the 3-2-1 regimen for completed works. 2) Personal cloud services are especially useful for backing up works and assets. Use a service that features manual or auto synchronization of updated documents on your device or computer. 3) Social Websites such as Flickr, YouTube, Vimeo and SoundCloud allow you to store and control shared access for finished photos, videos and audio files. 4) Academic Faculty should consider their Institutional Repository to archive and disseminate preprints, postprints, reports, digital learning objects and data sets. 5) Refresh mobile storage media with external disc drives. Duplicate drives for maximum protection.

Tools:

Incremental Back-up
- Backup and Restore (Win 7)
- Time Machine (Mac OSX)
- Norton 360 (Win)

Cloud Storage/Back-up
- Dropbox
- Box
- Amazon Cloud
- Carbonite
- Google Drive
- iCloud (Apple)
- Windows SkyDrive

Format Preservation Guides from the Library of Congress

By Adobe Systems, "Computer Icon of Adobe Reader X (V.10)", from http://creativecommons.org

Resources

SCOPE: External sources of information used for personal and professional activities, research and development. Resources help define one's own informational sphere. Digital resources may include PDF articles, reports, data, guidelines, database links, eBooks, websites.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: Unlike personal works and assets, resources are often consulted over an extended period of time, requiring management to ensure quick retrieval. Digital resources are highly distributed across the Internet as well as stored on personal computers and storage media. Because of this, multiple strategies should be considered to manage and preserve access to diverse resources.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES: 1) Self-imposed folder schemes exhibit personal preferences. Consider these when implementing such schemes as alphabetical, chronological, subject classification or combination thereof. 2) Tag your resources (see Tips) with descriptive terms to improve your workflow. 3) To access your saved resources across multiple devices, consider storing them on personal cloud accounts (see Tools for "Works & Assets"). 4) Manage, tag and share your Web links and citations online to access them anywhere.
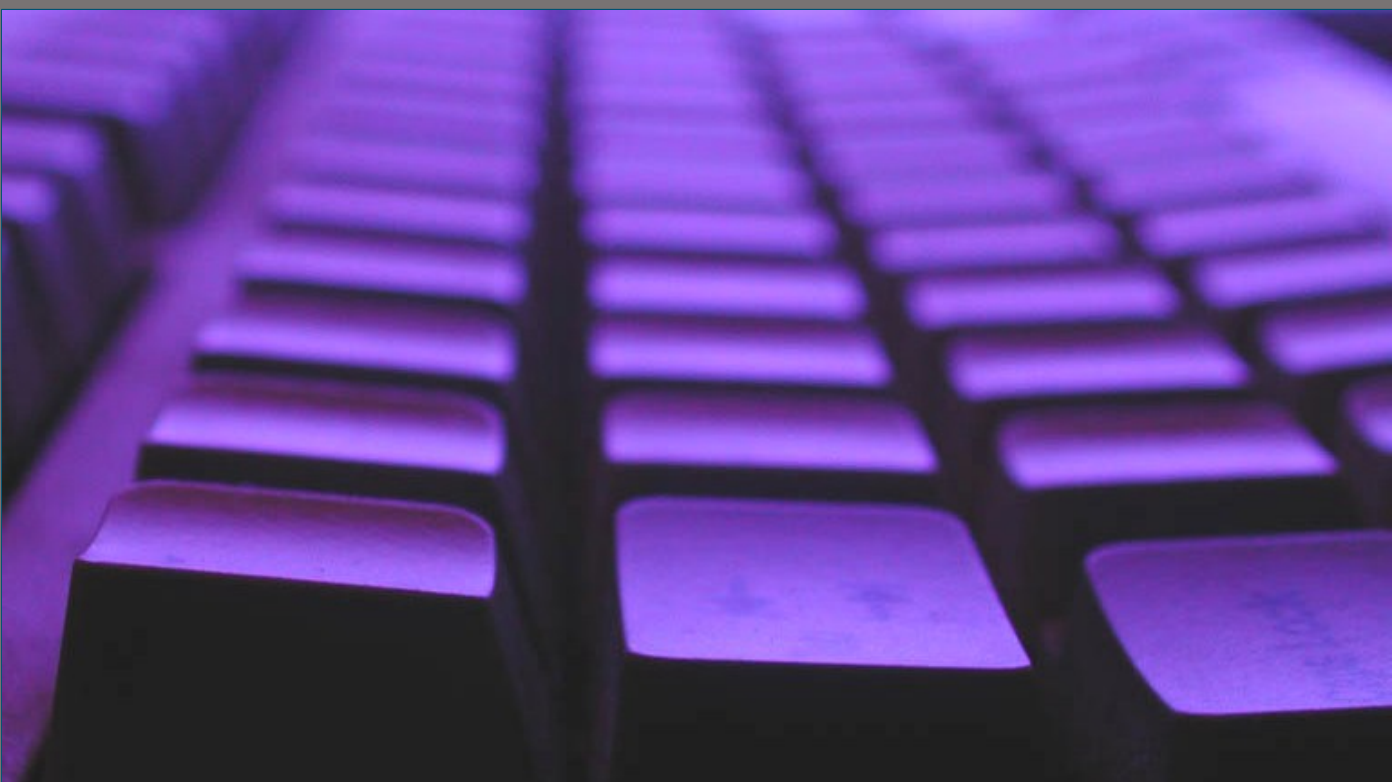
PRESERVATION STRATEGY: Since digital resources are acquired over time, use incremental back-ups or synced cloud services in conjunction with periodic 3-2-1 backups.

Tips & Tools:

- File Tagging for Windows OS7
- File Tagging for Mac OSX
- Elyse Tag Utility (Win/Mac)
- Delicious Bookmarking
- LiveBinders Web
- EndNote Web Citations
- Zotero Citations
- Mendeley Citations/PDF
- ReadCube PDF/Annotator

By Jim, "Keyboard" from unprofound.com

Communication

SCOPE: Electronic communication is often distributed between personal computers and on the Internet in social Web applications. E-mail, Facebook and Twitter entries are some examples.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: While most electronic communication is managed through an e-mail client, Web posts to social sites are generally unmanaged, difficult to retrieve, and less likely to be archived. Retrieving data from distributed applications may be challenging, however tools to assist you in this process can help (see Tips & Tools).

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES: 1) Implement a personal folder structure within your email application to organize important messages. This will also assist you in prioritizing which messages to archive. 2) Investigate utilities to retrieve your social Web Entries (see below).

PRESERVATION STRATEGIES: Email - Utilize archiving features within your e-mail client. Make sure to archive emails in personal folders. Save email data archive files as part of periodic 3-2-1 backups. Social Web data - 1) Review data management features and policies in Web apps you use. 2) Investigate utilities to archive your social web entries, histories and data.

Tips & Tools:

- Archive Outlook Email (Windows tutorial)
- Archive Entourage Email (Mac video tutorial)
- Data Liberation Front (Google Apps data)
- Backupify (Social Web Data)
- cloudpreservation (Social Web Data Subscription)

Email/Web Preservation Guides from the Library of Congress

WHAT DO I ARCHIVE AND WHEN?

Since digital storage is cheap, it's tempting to archive everything. However, too many files can make locating them a challenge. Best to consider your value system to determine which files you want to preserve for the long-term. Think of preservation as a maintenance activity, (like changing the oil in your car). Regularly schedule this activity during low production cycles, such as intersessions, or breaks in heavy activity.

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