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Volume 24 Issue 4 Introduction: From the Guest Editor

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From the Guest Editor



Data transfer, circa 1951: Moving books from Churchill Hall to the new library in Central Hall at Southern Oregon College of Education, now Southern Oregon University. Photo courtesy of the Southern Oregon Digital Archives at Southern Oregon University.

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A librarian by training and inclination, Maureen now has a faculty appointment as Assistant Professor Associate in the Sociology and Anthropology program at Southern Oregon University. Her research interests include heritage preservation, agricultural succession and land use planning. She is the curator of the Stories of Southern Oregon project published on YouTube and in the Southern Oregon Digital Archives at Southern Oregon University. The Stories project has been funded by the Oregon Heritage Commission, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and through a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Competitive Grant from the Oregon State Library.

Today it's hard to imagine life without a smartphone, but broadcast television, travel to the moon, MARC records, personal computers, email, the Internet, online library catalogs, cell phones, video on demand, virtual reality, and digital archive collections all came about in one human generation.

Throughout that generation of disruptive and innovative technologies, librarians have served the public good by providing the conceptual skills to organize and describe information and provide or facilitate access to it. Moreover, libraries, through cooperatives and information sharing agreements, have made possible the construction of massive data systems that serve our nation's needs with respect to heritage content, contemporary awareness and future planning.

And that's the foundation of this special issue of the *OLA Quarterly* on digital repositories and data harvests. In this issue, experts from Oregon's libraries, Larry Landis (OSU), Mark Dahl and Zachariah Selley (Lewis & Clark), Sarah Seymore (UO), Becca Evans (SOU), Julia Simic (UO) and Ryan Wick (OSU), Beth Dehn (Oregon Heritage Commission), and Ross Fuqua and Arlene Weible (Oregon State Library) describe their work to develop important collections that have been or will be harvested and shared broadly with users throughout the world. These aren't siloed collections that live solely in a local database or on one institution's server. These are world-class collections, shared globally to enrich human existence.

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As an introduction, I'd like to briefly recall the not-too-distant-past that has made it possible for us to share the important content we have worked so hard to preserve and document.

ARPANet, the digital network infrastructure that was to become the Internet was first established in 1969 by the U.S. Advanced Research Projects Agency allowing scientists in four universities to share data. TCP/IP, a system of machine addressing, message packaging and routing was deployed in the 1970s. In 1981, BITNET (Because It's Time Network) started up at the City University of New York and in the mid-1980s, ARPANet was handed over to the National Science Foundation and NSFNet was born. In 1987, the NorthWest Academic Computing Consortium was founded, a cooperative alliance of ten institutions in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and North Dakota that began to bring networks and computing infrastructure to our universities, libraries, schools and hospitals.

In the 1990s and 2000s, the technology revolution was pushed by the competitive, outsized Silicon Valley imaginings of entrepreneurs like Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Jim Clark and Marc Andreessen, Jerry Yang and David Filo, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, and others. Companies like SGI, Netscape, Excite, and AskJeeves surfaced, were bought and sold for billions and torpedoed into history. CP/M was forgotten, a keyboard turned into GUI, is now touch and voice, and before long, will be brain signals. Digital communications, inexpensive storage, brilliant software designers and ever more micro-miniaturized devices have transformed our world.

Despite some of the most inventive and disruptive technologies in human history, libraries have stood the test of time and continued to innovate and deliver. Librarians have watched and learned as these technologies evolved. They've adapted. They've taken the best that the digital revolution has offered and used it for the public good, for information sharing, community engagement, and new knowledge creation.

Enjoy this special *OLAQ* issue on digital repositories and data sharing. Join me in thinking about the past, celebrating our present, and marveling at our future.

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