

BEINECKE RARE BOOK & MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY

INTRODUCTION TO BORN DIGITAL ARCHIVAL ACQUISITION

The Beinecke Library (BRBL) is committed to collecting, preserving, and providing access to important cultural heritage archives in a range of formats and media. In keeping with this commitment, the Library recognizes and appreciates the increasing and inevitable significance of born-digital materials in archives. We have established a flexible framework for working with archive creators and their representatives in various contexts, in order to:

- acquire and safely transfer digital media and files to the Beinecke,
- accession, organize, and preserve these born-digital materials, and
- provide access to them for various research and education purposes.

To that end, the Beinecke Library employs the following guidelines in approaching the assessment, evaluation, collection, capture, accession, and preservation of materials stored on digital media:

- BRBL collects digital archival materials in any and all relevant forms (text, image, sound, etc.) and formats (floppy disk, flash drive, CD, etc.).
- BRBL tends to approach acquisitions of born-digital materials in two different ways. Sometimes only a small group of materials is acquired – for example, a specific body of correspondence. In other cases, the Library might acquire an entire computer or several hundred floppy disks. In each case, the scope of the acquisition will be determined through conversation with a curator.
- BRBL prefers that archive creators not reorganize their files in preparation for offering a collection to the Library. A creator's original arrangement of the files has intrinsic value and adds context to an archive. In some cases, a curator might suggest that some reorganization and labeling may be helpful prior to transferring materials to BRBL, but that work should be done in close consultation with BRBL staff.
- In most cases, BRBL's procedure will be to capture all content from a piece of digital media, whether the media is a floppy disk with limited storage capacity or a laptop with a large hard drive. This approach involves disk imaging, or capturing a "snapshot" of all files on the media. In keeping with acquisition practices described above, BRBL will in some cases wish to capture the contents of digital media without any advance collection editing by the creator or his or her representative; in some cases the Beinecke curator may choose to capture a selection from a larger body of materials.
- BRBL prefers that archive creators not attempt to resuscitate old computers or try to recover files from obsolete media in preparation for offering a collection to the Library. Turning on a computer for the first time in a number of years can put the contents at risk. Similarly, accessing older media and trying to open the files might result in irreversible

change to the original file format and date/time stamp. BRBL has the staff and equipment to capture files from older hardware safely.

- BRBL currently provides access to born-digital materials on-site in its physical reading room. Materials are accessed via a designated computer with special viewing software and additional security precautions intended to prevent researchers from copying files. BRBL does not currently offer researchers online access to born-digital collection materials.