Measuring the Impact of Preserving Digital Assets

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The Portal to Texas History

Search within the The Portal to Texas History

Featured Collections

Daily Cosmopolitan
Published in Cameron County, Texas, the Daily Cosmopolitan began distribution to the Brownsville population in 1879. The Daily Cosmopolitan was issued every night of the week except Sunday. Editor W.P. Cairney was fluent in Spanish and therefore specialized in reporting on Matamoros residents and topics, along with nearby border town news.

Stats: We have a total of 190,154 unique items, comprising 26 million files. Over the last 34 days, we've logged 329,134 uses of these items by people like you.

Featured Partner
Jacob Fontaine Religious Museum
The Jacob Fontaine Religious Museum collections include materials that represent the history of African American churches in the Austin area. The museum is named for Jacob Fontaine, a slave preacher who founded thirteen Baptist churches in Travis County.

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Portal to Texas History

- 2003
- 200+ collaborative partners
- 220K digital objects
- 2.8 million files
- 300K uses per month

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Methods and Results

- Common Framework for Impact Areas
- Key Informant Interviews with Partners
- Content Analysis of User Feedback
- User Survey
- Partner Survey
Common Framework for Impact Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Areas</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Existence value (a good thing to do; people like that this is being done)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Preservation of cultural heritage for future access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Usage (unique use instances)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Decreased costs of holding materials physically (floor space repurposing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Funding increases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Risk management (avoidance of loss)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Return on investment (usage per item)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Tourism (promotion through social networks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Attendance at educational events (physical or virtual locations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Feedback from educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Richer and more accessible lesson plans and curricula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Outputs from higher education digital humanities research and digital scholarship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Common Framework for Impact Areas

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental</strong></td>
<td>• Avoidance of travel (economies of gasoline usage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Elimination of physical curation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operational</strong></td>
<td>• Increased effectiveness in materials management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Efficient fulfillment of duplication requests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Staffing impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No-cost outsourcing of resource preservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political</strong></td>
<td>• Prestige value (enhanced public profile; improved visibility)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Marketing strategy (branded online product versus a physical item)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td>• Sharing via social networks (facebook, twitter, blogs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increased access (search engines, Google)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Activities pursuant to organizational mission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Informant Interviews with Partners

Cultural Impact: "The ease of access has allowed us to get things in local news, local media outlets, national news; when we made national news on the Bonnie and Clyde materials, that was something a producer in New York was able to look at virtually, without having to send somebody over to look at the originals."

-- Archivist
Economic Impact: “Certainly by having this material digitized, we have, and in a secure location, we’ve limited that fact that if a tornado hits this building that we’re sitting in and rips the top off and the archives is flooded, and so forth, at least a few things are safely ensconced elsewhere.”

-- Academic Library Director, Private Institution

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Key Informant Interviews with Partners

Measuring the Impact of Preserving Digital Assets: Partner Interviews

- Cultural
- Economic
- Educational
- Environmental
- Operating
- Political
- Social

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Content Analysis of User Feedback

Cultural Impact: I am very glad to have found this site. I am interested in the events relating to the assassination of JFK and I live in London, UK, where it is very hard to find first hand material on the subject.”

-- Portal User

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Content Analysis of User Feedback

- Social: 10%
- Educational: 19%
- Cultural: 70%

Percentage of Comments (N = 548)

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Content Analysis of User Feedback

- Enhancement: 2%
- Technical: 11%
- Reference: 40%
- Correction: 48%

Percentage of Comments (N = 2807)

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User Survey

- Launched May 5, 2012
- Gathered responses for 3 weeks
- 314 responses
  - Portal newsletter subscribers (63%)
  - Embedded link on website (25%)
  - Facebook announcement (12%)

http://texashistory.unt.edu/
User Survey

Identity of Respondents ($N = 314$)

- Other: 21%
- Lifelong Learner: 15%
- Librarian: 10%
- Historian: 21%
- Genealogist: 33%
User Survey

Frequency of Portal Use ($N = 314$)

- Rarely: 21%
- Daily or Weekly: 35%
- Monthly: 28%
- Other: 16%

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User Survey

Age of Respondents ($N = 249$)

- 18-39: 11%
- 40-49: 12%
- 50-59: 29%
- 60-69: 30%
- 70+: 18%

[Graph showing age distribution]

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Age Demographics:

>18  .5%
18-34 16.3%
35-44 20.9%
45-54 26.4%
55-64 24.1%
65+ 10.5%

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User Survey

Education of Respondents (N = 245)

- Completed Doctorate or professional degree: 18%
- Completed Masters: 30%
- Some graduate work: 12%
- Four-year college degree: 15%
- Two-year college degree or less: 25%

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User Survey: Interesting findings

Question 3 of the survey asked users:
Indicate the value you place on the Portal’s digital resources:

1=No Value
2=Little Value
3=Moderate Value
4=Much Value
5=Huge Value
User Survey: Interesting findings

Question 3 of the survey asked users:
Indicate the value you place on the Portal’s digital resources:

88% of respondents selected a value of
“moderate” 10%
“much” 29%
“huge” 49%
User Survey: Significant Chi Square Results

Financial Impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://texashistory.unt.edu/
User Survey

Impact Areas Reported ($N = 314$)

- Educational: 40%
- Financial: 25%
- Research: 47%
- Cultural: 21%
- Social: 16%
- Environmental: 13%
- Other: 10%

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User Survey: Interesting Findings

Impact areas described by Historians and Others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Areas</th>
<th>Historians (n = 65)</th>
<th>Others (n = 67)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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User Survey: Comments

“If there is another side of the story, this is where it will be found.”
User Survey: Educational Impact

“access to tons of information that I have no way to physically access as I live in Chicago.”

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User Survey: Educational Impact

“[I] have recommended the lesson plans you created to go with digitized resources to future teachers in my university's College of Education.”
User Survey: Educational Impact

“I am constantly surprising people with things that they can find on the Portal. Have been able to garner interest with 'tweens' and young people by the historical photographs of our town, the railroads, etc.”
User Survey: Financial Impact

“I can work from home and not have the expense of travel.”
User Survey: Financial Impacts

“Even though we are a major research university in Texas, like everyone else, our materials budgets have taken some serious hits in recent years. The fact that the Portal to Texas History is free is such a blessing for us.”
User Survey: Research Impact

“A Google search on any topic related to Texas history almost always leads me to the Portal. There is more content here than on any one or 10 libraries that I might visit.”

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User Survey: Research Impact

“This is a vital resource for my family history research. It allows me to find out about people, not just birth and death dates . . . These facts made the difference in my research because it created an image of a person, not just names & dates.”

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User Survey: Cultural Impact

“I keep learning more and more about my community through the portal.”
User Survey: Social Impact

“People are meeting and talking about all the things they have read about in these old newspapers. Laughing and talking, recalling other stories they have heard.”

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User Survey: Environmental Impact

“Reduces travel to archives, mitigates pollution and carbon footprint.”
User Survey: Environmental Impact

“Saves on paper. Go Green!"
Partner Survey: Methods

Survey respondents were asked to rate the degree of impact for 1 to 5 sub-areas in each of six impact areas: Educational, Economic, Operational, Political, Social, and Environmental.

The rating scale for each sub-area was:

1 = No Value; 2 = Slight Value; 3 = Some Value; 4 = Much Value; 5 = Huge Value

Top Five Impact Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Impacts</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Median*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Social - Increased Access to Resources</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Social - Preserving Cultural Heritage</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Economic - Risk Management</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Political - Prestige Value</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Political - Marketing Opportunity</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Partner Survey

Impact of Digitizing Resources

Impact Area
- Environmental
- Social
- Political
- Operational
- Educational
- Economic

Degree of Impact
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70%

- Huge
- Much
- Some
- Slight
- None

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Partner Survey: Text Responses

Please describe the major impact(s) you think digitizing your resources has had on your organization.

- Cultural: 50%
- Political: 38%
Partner Survey: Cultural Impact

“Enlarged our audience worldwide.”
Partner Survey: Cultural Impact

“Easy to point patrons to the website, easy to search.”

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Partner Survey: Political Impact

“Increased awareness of our collections and gained the archives some positive PR within the larger institution.”
Partner Survey: Political Impact

“It has raised the libraries standing in the community. People are surprised to find that we are so "advanced".”
Partner Survey: text responses

Please describe the major impact(s) you think digitizing your resources has had on the people who use those resources.

Cultural: 86%

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Partner Survey: How are you currently measuring the impact of digitizing your resources?

- 38% - Not measuring
- 14% - Measuring from oral or anecdotal info
- 30% - Usage statistics
- 12% - Reference questions or visits
- 6% - Other

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Partner Survey: What are the challenges you face in measuring this impact?

33% - Lack of time or staff
  7% - Cost

28% - Lack of expertise
  7% - no challenges

15% - challenges with the Portal
  6% - other

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Summary Findings: Commonalities between Partner and User Surveys

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Summary Findings: Differences between Partner and User Surveys
Areas for Future Research

• 18% of Users 70 and over in age
• Gender differences in financial impacts
• Challenges for Partner assessment of impact

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