

The No-Nonsense Guide to Born-Digital Content. By Heather Ryan and Walker Sampson. London: Facet Publishing, 2018. 240 pp. Softcover. \$75.99.

Archivists and librarians are at a unique point in history, as the record of current human existence is exponentially born digital. But what is “born-digital content,” exactly? In *The No-Nonsense Guide to Born-Digital Content*, Heather Ryan and Walker Sampson define it as “content that is being created, distributed and used solely in digital form” (p. 2). Ryan and Sampson both work at the University of Colorado Boulder where Ryan was teaching on the subject when she identified a need for a comprehensive resource covering the essential aspects of preserving born-digital content. Together with Sampson, she penned this timely and useful guide for ensuring proper stewardship of born-digital content.

The foreword, written by Trevor Owens, head of digital content management at the Library of Congress, introduces the reader to the stakes by making three observations: “we will never catch up, our biggest risk is inaction and we all need to get beyond the screen in our understanding of digital information” (p. xiii). Owens’s observations encourage the reader to join the community and engage in practicing the craft of digital preservation, suggesting that the only way to make it happen is by *doing* the work. But how? Where does one start? What tools are needed? *The No-Nonsense Guide to Born-Digital Content* does an excellent job of answering these questions and more. It is clearly and thoughtfully organized, introducing the reader to what born-digital content is and why it is important, and the many and varied kinds of digital content they are likely to encounter, laying the foundation for the following chapters. Ryan and Sampson take readers through the stages of selection, acquisition, description, preservation, and access, before discussing workflows and new areas of born-digital materials.

The authors begin by framing the preservation of born-digital content as they would paper-based records and continue to relate back to “traditional” archival workflows, language, and methodologies throughout the chapters as a way to teach a new concept using those already well understood. For example, in the chapter on acquisition, they apply *respect du fonds*, the guiding principle in archival studies, to digital objects, whereby not only the files (content) but also the file systems (context) must be preserved to maintain the original order and provenance. Although they use paper-based collections as a backdrop for their teachings in the rest of the book, they also call for archivists and librarians to move outside their comfort zones. For example, moving from the familiar analog records that fill the stacks to a PDF version of a scanned paper record, our comfort level grows as we begin digitizing collections. However, “we can no longer stay in our comfort zone of managing only digital documents and images which are dealt with more easily due to the similarities they feature with their physical counterparts” (p. 32).

The authors understand that digital, especially born-digital, content can be daunting, but this step-by-step guide provides readers with the knowledge and skills needed to ensure the continued preservation of and access to born-digital content. In one chapter, they go so far as to walk the reader through creating and navigating directories using the command line, and in another, how to mount a disk image volume. The authors also consistently provide concrete steps and examples, such as what to include in crawls for

website preservation, thereby increasing the readers' confidence in their ability to do the work.

The No-Nonsense Guide teems with useful tools, opening with a list of abbreviations and a glossary, preparing readers for the acronyms, programs, and jargon that will be presented throughout the rest of the book and serving as a quick reference and guide. Ryan and Sampson provide many resources and verbatim examples of policies, workflows, donor agreements, case studies, and models, reminding us that collaboration is key in doing the most we can with what we have. Each chapter ends with a conclusion and further reading, reminding readers that this is an introduction and, however thorough, a wealth of additional resources is available. And, in case this is not enough, the final section of the book includes a detailed list of resources as an appendix, separated into books, journals, reports, technical registries, websites, conferences, and communities.

Finally, Ryan and Sampson lead the reader into the future, exploring emerging areas of born-digital content. Acknowledging that this is uncharted territory, they encourage the reader to start thinking about solutions for preserving new and problematic content, such as software (as object), web-based applications, cloud storage, and digital art. The authors encourage growing one's skills, and they recommend how to do so, such as learning UNIX, Linux, and command line scripting. They also encourage readers to teach others and to contribute scripts to open-source projects, emphasizing that the digital realm is often about sharing, and encouraging others to share, within the archival community.

The No-Nonsense Guide to Born-Digital Content provides the tools, including the confidence, necessary to go forth saying that yes, you too can do this! The book's encouraging and thoughtful voice asks readers to try (e.g., one bit of command line code) in order to feel empowered to take on the avalanche of bits and bytes careening toward them. It also gives readers permission at the end to *not do*, to decide this is not for them. At the least, readers will have a more-than-basic understanding of what is involved, what the stakes are, and how to survive the terminal.

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