

**FY 2022 Unit Annual Report:  
Office of Digital Strategies**

## **Unit Narrative**

Formally, the Office of Digital Strategies had a small staff, the Associate Dean (Chris Prom) and an assistant (Hannah Williams) during the period reported here, as well as a half-time graduate assistant (Hailey Vasquez during AY 21-22), funded from the state budget. In addition, the group included two grant-funded positions (Email Archives Community Fellow, Ruby Martinez; Email Archiving in PDF Community Fellow Eden Irwing) and two graduate assistants funded by the Merrick Fund (Harrison Price, Frankie Serio), who worked on projects to curate born digital and digitized collections. The main purpose of the unit is to coordinate work around information and digital technology, to ensure it is meeting the needs of the Library and campus.

The Office of Digital Strategies is important in coordinating work relating to our information technology and computing infrastructure. The helps provide strategic direction for the following groups and by extension Library units that rely on their services (e.g. the entire Library):

- Library IT
- Preservation Services
- Discovery Services
- User Experience
- Rare Book and Manuscript Library
- Research Data Service

In addition, the office has responsibility for assisting the Dean with Academic Affairs and faculty development, serving as a liaison to the Provost's Office staff, including the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (Bill Bernhard) and Associate Provost for Faculty Development (Amy Santos). Finally, the unit head (Prom) served as a liaison to the grants and contracts coordinator, Wendy Balthazor, assisting with the development, review, and college approval of proposed grant projects.

Beginning in May 2022, the portfolio was reduced, to include only RDS, Library IT, and grants management, given the fact that I began serving in a 50% capacity as Acting Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation — Arts Humanities, and Related Fields.

This report includes appendices describing the work of Discovery Services and User Experiences. Library IT, Preservation, RBML, and RDS submitted separate reports, so are not covered in detail.

The Unit works closely with Library faculty and staff, the Dean, other AULs, Assistant Deans, and Executive Committee to understand our current IT environment and needs so that we can steward our resources wisely toward strategic needs. During the AY 21-22, that included support for the Library's reopening plans in Fall 22, as I was asked to help coordinate the overall Library response.

**Major Activities pursued during FY 2022 included the following:**

***Digital Strategies***

- Supporting IDEALS rebuild project, planning for statewide repository service (led by Kyle Rimkus), and implementation of metadata/name authority system.
- Supported planning for lifecycle replacement of digitization equipment in Digitization Services.
- User Experience: Meeting frequently with John Laskowski to prioritize activities and support his work with UX clients.
- Implemented consultative processes via Divisional visits and Digital Strategies Liaison Group. The latter group provides informal but critical communication mechanisms about IT, digital preservation, and
- Consult widely with unit heads, internal groups such as CAPT, as well as campus IT staff in related areas, such as Technology Services, NCSA, CITL, and ATLAS.
- Shepherded changes to Kyle Rimkus's position, which will report direction to AUL for Digital Strategies beginning in summer 2023, with the title "Digital Programs and Partnerships Librarian.
- Supporting Kristen Wilson and advocating for campus and external resources in support of Distributed Museum (FAA, Siebel Center for Design).

***Academic Affairs Support***

- Supported DEIA Task Force and implementation of facilitated workshops.
- Deepening knowledge of budget, HR, and academic affairs in the Library and Campus. Advising Dean and other groups concerning governance and budget issues.
- Coordination of efforts to implement new communication 9 and changes to tenure evaluation in the Library.
- Guiding Faculty through appointment processes, sabbatical leave requests, professional development support, and other academic processes

- Advising individual faculty members and in particular new faculty regarding grant development issues.
- Joined and actively participated in Library DEIA Task Force and supported DEIA initiatives.
- Mentoring and supporting a cadre of graduate students who contribute to the diversity of the profession.
- Supporting the development of a proposal and an appointment for research support (Lisa Hinchliffe).

### **Grants Support**

- Led Mellon-funded re-grant programs supporting email archiving.
- Leading IMLS-funded grant program to develop email archiving in PDF (file format development).
- Supporting Doris Duke Revitalization Grant ([link](#)).
- Advised multiple faculty and assisted in preparing competitive grant applications.
- Oversaw grant pre-award approvals, in an advisory role to the Dean, and post-award management.

### **Major challenges faced by the unit**

One challenging area continues to be staffing, particularly for IT professionals who are much in demand, as several positions were vacated. We did make substantial process on that front in AY 21-22 and currently have only one position open (IMS Manager). In addition, we face challenges in properly staffing digital curation services, such as support for the ingest, metadata creation, and quality control for born-digital collections, web archives, and related materials, as well as support for Special Collections Staff. This area could benefit from increased assessment and analytics, as new positions should be added to support processing services.

### **Ways in which the unit and/or its members contributed to Library-wide programs:**

The Office of Digital Strategies does not provide direct user services, but indirectly supports all of our library programs, including reference, instructional services; scholarly communications and publishing; discovery and delivery, assessment; collection management; digital content creation; preservation, public engagement, and others, through the systems that we manage and provide.

### **Review progress made on Unit Annual Goals for FY22**

The most important and critical digital strategies goal for the next year will be ensuring that all library staff feels engaged with and able to contribute to the continued digital transformation that the Library will undergo and to know that the Library has a supportive, inclusive work environment; a place where individual and collective creativity and service are encouraged.

- *While this was a rather intangible goal, I feel we made significant progress in this area over the course of the year, via the consultative processes outlined above (divisional consultation, DS Liaisons group). Support for digital goals was also demonstrated in strong support for vacant IT positions*

Other specific goals were listed as follows. Progress is noted in italics:

- Support successful rollout of new IDEALS technology. *COMPLETED*
- Help Preservation Services develop a supportable model for statewide repository service. *IN PROCESS. Am assisting Kyle Rimkus and Anne Craig in developing a sustainable technical and business model, and we have a preliminary proposal pending with IMLS National Leadership Grant*
- Help transition restricted access digitization to a controlled digital lending program. *ON HOLD. In the short term, the full scanning service is available, however, we are not actively considering CDL in light of the BIG Collection initiative.*
- Help DEIA TF and the Library navigate difficult conversations to implement structural improvements. *IN PROCESS and Library wide facilitated workshop will be implemented in AV 22-23. I will be a facilitator.*
- Support IT in recruiting and filling open positions. *COMPLETED: All open searches were filled.*
- Support Special Collections Division and Preservation Services in moving toward collaborative models for processing digital content. *IN PROCESS. Proposal pending for discussion with preservation services, special collections, and EC.*
- Help Library faculty develop and implement new promotion and tenure criteria *COMPLETED*
- Explore the potential for Library-adjacent Open Source Programs Office and external support. *IN PROCESS. Discussion is continuing with Dan Katz and I hope to move this to a discussion with Sloan Foundation*
- Support development of mentoring and faculty/staff development resources. *IN PROCESS. I would like to make more progress here, but was glad to see the proposal for Research Support move forward*
- Assess and help develop succession planning for unique digital services (e.g. Bibleaves, EasySearch, Archon). *IN PROCESS. This is dependent on staffing in IMS. With the hiring of a new Application Integration Develop Leonel Rameriz and the eventual filling of the head of IMS position), we hope to make progress in this area in 2022/32.*

## **Unit Annual Goals for FY22**

- Engage fully in Library-wide strategic planning efforts
- Engage directly with the Library's DEI efforts, particularly related to workplace culture and faculty development/retention (SD 4.1,5-6).

- Foster and help secure resources and cohesive organizational/staffing models that better support the development of immersive and emerging technologies and services to students and faculty. (SD 1.3, 5; 2.1,4)
- LIETC support and involvement . . .
- Supporting and helping secure resources for increased digital curation capacity and staffing for general and special collections, including ingest and metadata creation. (SD 1.1-5, 4.4).
- Foster and Lead the development of a Library analytics/impacts dashboard (SD 4.6)
- Contribute to BIG Collection Initiatives via BTAA Library IT/Digital Strategies Group (SD 1.1-5; 2.3; 3.1,3-5).
- Support the development of Repository Services, Medusa, statewide service, Metadata Manager, improvements to the digital library, and planning for Archon replacement, balancing among competing priorities (SD 1)
- Transition Kyle Rimkus to a new reporting role, and support for a revised operational model in Preservation Services for curation support (SD 4.3)
- Support and assess discovery and delivery platforms such as EasySearch (SD 1.2;4.2)
- Organize a successful iPres 2023 conference (SD 3.1-2,4) ([link](#)).
- Begin discussions to foster areas of institutional research focus, such as discovery services (SD 1.3, 4.2)
- Engage the new Dean in discussions related to increased support for digital services and off-campus learners; explore potential target areas for strategic hiring initiatives (SD 4.4-6)
- Continue to support and assess needs for publishing and OA infrastructure.
- Lead policy updates re grants, and socialize/communication processes.
- Investigate support mechanisms for the hiring of MS IM students and paid practica, including for Illinois Distributed Museum

### **What the unit needs to support these specific goals**

Overall, the goals listed above are collaborative. They do not require extensive direct support, although some of the specific objectives would benefit from increased investment in positions and reorientation toward digital services. To that end, I will present needs to the new Dean, EC, and administrative groups when windows of opportunity open.

### **Statistical Profile**

**Facilities:** Room 246G (Chris Prom's Office)

#### **Personnel**

- Chris Prom, Associate Dean, Digital Strategies
- Hannah Williams, Office Support Associate
- Academic Hourly Employee: Ruby Martinez
- Graduate Assistants: Hailey Vasquez, Harrison Price, Franke Serio

**User Services**

-- Not applicable.