

Interviewee: **Norman, Joanna (Jody)**
Interviewer: **Valerie Modoux**
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Modoux: First of all, can you tell me about your position at the State Archives?

Norman: Well, I am the Archives supervisor, and my duties involved are supervising the Archives reference area, which includes the photographic collection, all of the reference services, the services where the public comes in and request material. I oversee the staff that provides access to that material. And I direct the Florida Memory Project website. That's a digital initiative that the Archives has taken to digitize to make available online some of its most popular, most used, primary source resources.

Modoux: When did the digital process start? Did you decide long ago to go digital with the items of the collection?

Norman: Actually, yes. We started digitizing the photographic collection almost twelve years ago. That was the first collection that we decided to digitize. And it was not called Florida Memory back then. We picked the photographic collection because it was nationally known; we got many many requests. It was not organized at all, so we thought that digitizing might be the answer... Digitizing includes two steps: the scanning and then you've got the cataloging. And the cataloging was critical to us, because it provided an index to those images. And you could search them more thoroughly. So we started with the photographic collection. The idea was to do a hundred thousand photographs and quit. Well, three years into it -four years maybe -it was so popular that we decided we could start digitizing other collections -textual collections, audio collections, video collections. And we did that, and that's when we changed the name because the project kind of took on a persona -very much like the American Memory Project. So we asked them if it was ok to use the name Florida Memory Project. In the beginning, we kind of tried to parallel a lot of what they were doing. I think that we separated quite a bit now, in what we do. The resource has really grown. So we have about five hundred and fifty thousand individual digital resources available online, on the Florida Memory Project website.

Modoux: Are they mostly photographs? Or do you have different types of items?

Norman: Right, we have photographs, documents, audio clips and video clips.

Modoux: Do you supervise all of the digitization? What are your responsibilities in regards to that?

Norman: I supervise over all of the digitization for this website. We have a larger Florida

Electronic Library that Mark Flynn oversees. And that's an electronic library that is a portal for many different collections, and one of those collections is Florida Memory. Florida Memory is our in-house project, using our resources. We are only highlighting what we have here in the State Library and the Archives of Florida. It is only the tip of the iceberg.

Modoux: How do you decide what you are going to digitize? Is it something that is in danger, or items you know are the most requested by patrons?

Norman: It's both. In the beginning, we frequently picked from the collections that were most fragile and most popular -like the J.K. Small photographic collection, which is all glass negatives. It is a very popular. He was a famous botanist. We could not have people come in and handle the original glass negatives, especially on a regular basis. Yet, we are mandated by law to provide access to them. So we had to figure out another way to provide access. So in the beginning we chose the most fragile and popular photographic collections. [pause] Since then, we have targeted historians and genealogists and digitize the resources our staff feel they use the most. Those, we can digitize, and make available online. We have a list, and we are working down that list. Now, there are a couple of things that could inhibit that progress. One is preservation work. For instance, when we digitized the Spanish Land Grant, it took us a year to digitize and index the Land Grants, but it took three years for the preservational officer to go through the entire collection to perform the preservation work necessary to make it safe for us to handle the records. .

Modoux: What kind of process they have to go through so you can go ahead and digitize the documents?

Norman: Technically, I might fall short on my description, but if there are tears, then they reaper the tears. If the document is really acidic, they may de-acidify it. If it is folded up, they flatten it for you. Sometimes they will put a special backing on it, an archivally safe backing -something they put on the back but they can take it back off if they need to -just so that it gets more support. That's about all they have to do in order for us to be able to scan the documents.

Modoux: And what about you, when you digitize items. In what ways do you have to be careful during the process?

Norman: You have to use a flat bed scanner, so everything is scanned individually, laid flat. Usually, you also need a pretty large scsuliler because some of the documents are pretty big. And you want to get a good master scan, because you don't want to go back and have to repeatedly scan the original. And that's what we strive for. We work with archival standards, and so we create a master TIFF file for everything we digitize. And then we convert that .tiff to a web-delievery jpeg and gif. But that master tiff, we store it [cell phone vibrating] in two different areas. [Turning off the cell phone]. One is stored off-site, so that we have the master tiff on a portable hard drive and then we have another master tiff on a DVD. The DVD stays with us, so that Adam and the folks in the photographic collection can make reproductions for users. And

the portable harddrives are kept at the State Record Center, in another facility, in case something happens to the ones we have here in this building. We can always go to the other facility and get copies of all our master scans.

Modoux: Now, about those standards you mentioned earlier. How do you set those standards?

Norman: We don't set the standards. We follow the standards. And the standards are set by major organizations in the country. Typically, what we do is that we follow the same standards as the Library of Congress. Because those are tried and true, and I think some of the highest standards that you will find in the country. And so, frequently we carry out our digitization projects using the same standards.

Modoux: Can you give me some more details about those standards?

Norman: For Master image, like I said, you would use .tiff format, and the smallest file will be at 300dpi, uncompressed image at 5x7. So anything that is 5x7 and larger you can scan at its original size at 300dpi. We have actually moved up now, because of our patrons requests -even though that's still the set standards -we have raised our standards because many of our patrons request 600dpi at 5x7. So now, our standard is 600dpi at 5x7 uncompressed. If it is smaller, say its 35mm slide, we scan that at 4000dpi. [office phone rings] (I am sorry).

Modoux: So that is for the Master copy.

Norman: Yes, that is the Master. [hen we convert -using Alchemy software, the master .tiff to a web usable .jpeg and .gif.

Modoux: Those are the standards for photographs. Is it different for text documents?

Norman: Basically, no. It is the same. We use the same standards. With documents, what we display on screen... Typically, we won't use the smaller version, the thumbnail. But we will have a web usable .jpeg. Which means it is fine for viewing on your computer, but if you print it out, it lacks some of the details and sharpness that the original would have. The original master .tiff or the original document itself.

Modoux: In your opinion, what are the advantages of being able to digitize everything?

Norman: Well, the advantages are great, because before we started the website, before we started digitizing items from the Archives, people had to physically visit the archives in order to use our collection. The Archives houses mostly primary sources, unique resources that are not duplicated. So we may have the only copy available. We have the original 1838 Constitution. We have the original Spanish Land Grants. So if something should happen to them, we would lose something irreplaceable. Now people are able to view these historical irreplaceable primary

source documents online, without physically visiting Tallahassee. And that has been great. People worldwide use it now. And it used to be fairly localized for some of our main users. I think also the outreach now is tremendous. We get 800 patrons that call up or walk in or e-mail us a month in the Archives. We get 200,000 "visits" a month to the Florida Memory Website. Visits, not hits. We get over a million hits. But the visits mean they really are checking the site out. And preservation. Though a lot of archivists will argue that digital format is not long lasting, is not a preservation format. It does work for us in regards to preservation, because people don't have to handle the originals anymore. They can handle the digital copy.

Modoux: What about the disadvantages or the risks with digital format? Do you see any?

Norman: [takes some time to reflect on this] I think . . . The things everyone has to deal with on the internet are the only disadvantages I can think of, off the top of my head. We have a lot of people downloading images and then selling them on ebay. And, we have a lot of people use the images without our permission or without giving us credit. And we really can't police their use, or do anything about that. But the advantages so far out weigh the disadvantages. I can't really think of any real disadvantages. People forget... I will say this because Beth would say this [laughs]. People forget that the real nuts and bolts of an archives is the collection management; the people that accession the collections, who develop the finding aids, and who arrange and describe them, so people like me can digitize them and put them online. The Collection Management folks are almost forgotten, because we get all the sparkles and glitter; we get all the attention. I don't know if that's a disadvantage. But I do think sometimes people lose sight of what an Archives is and what an archives does, when they just go online and can download this material.

Modoux: Now, what about storage. You said you keep things on an external hard drive and on DVDs. I know Jamie has a backup server. Do you see any risks with storage systems? Has it been pretty stable?

Norman: It has been very stable. But yes, there is a risk. And that's why we back them up twice. And that's why we ... We used to just back it up on two DVDs, and we store one DVD at the Record Center, and one DVD here at the Archives. The Stability of DVDs is something that has been questioned a little bit, so we went to portable hard drives for a number of reasons. First, it is faster, we can put more on it, but I think that overall it may prove to be a more stable, a more reliable storage.

Modoux: The DVD or the hard drive?

Norman: The hard drive. But we won't know. Right now, we have not picked up one CD or DVD that has been corrupt that we have made. And I think we are very fortunate.

Modoux: Do you keep following how things are evolving to know if you need to change support?

Norman: Yes. We always go back and monitor; you know, go through and spot check the CDs and DVDs to see if we need to migrate them, possibly to a newer technology.

Modoux: Now, my last question. You said something about how digital can help with preservation and things like that. There is a debate whether digital is just a tool while waiting for something better, or if it is actually a preservation format. What is your opinion on that?

Norman: Well, for us, our goal was to use digitization as an access tool to provide better access. We always stressed that it was not a preservation move, but that we want to make our collection more accessible. But, personally, as time has evolved, I am thinking that... You know, I see reticulating tapes, or reel- to-reel tapes that are deteriorating, and original photographs that are in horrible shape; that even in good storage continues to deteriorate. My personal opinion is that items in digital form can be preserved if they are monitored frequently, and transferred to newer and better technology when appropriate and/or necessary. The technology is always going to be changing, so you will always be migrating to the next and newer technology. I think we are beginning to use digitization, without consciously recognizing it, more as a preservation tool than we ever thought.

Modoux: You were talking about Beth earlier. She says that "Digital is not archival". What do you think?

Norman: Yes, a lot of archivists say that. And I think it's because there has not been enough studies and not enough information. Polyester tape is still considered the most archival format for microfilms and photographic and movie film. The Archives community does not recognize digitization as an archival format now, but I think that may change in the future. I still would say we use it more as an access tool than a preservation tool. But I recognize the preservation benefits more and more everyday.

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