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No more lost files: Take control of your digital life (Library Workshop)

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No more lost files: Take control of your digital life

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March 2021

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“Digital documents last forever—or five years, whichever comes first.”

—Jeff Rothenberg, Senior Computer Scientist at the RAND Corporation (in *Digital Curation* by Gillian Oliver and Ross Harvey)

To participate in today's session, you'll want to be sitting at your Rowan computer. Make sure that you have a browser, Microsoft Word, and Outlook open.

You are an archivist

(Of your own digital archive, at least)

What are some examples of items in your digital archive, things you might want to save?

- Text files
- Web pages
- Email
- Social media
- Photos
- Video
- Audio
- Digitized analog material (print and analog photos/videos/audio)
- Personal financial and legal e-documents

Paper deteriorates, and digital files can get corrupted. Unlike paper, however, even slight damage to a digital file can mean complete loss of all information.

Personal Digital Archiving

How to be the steward of your own digital assets

There are two major enemies to successful digital archiving: **(dis)organization** and **obsolescence**.

Obsolescence is hard to do much about: Storage media can become outdated.

One of the big differences between the analog and digital worlds is that corporations are important middlemen in the storage of digital data. Commercial organizations can go out of business or change their terms of service.

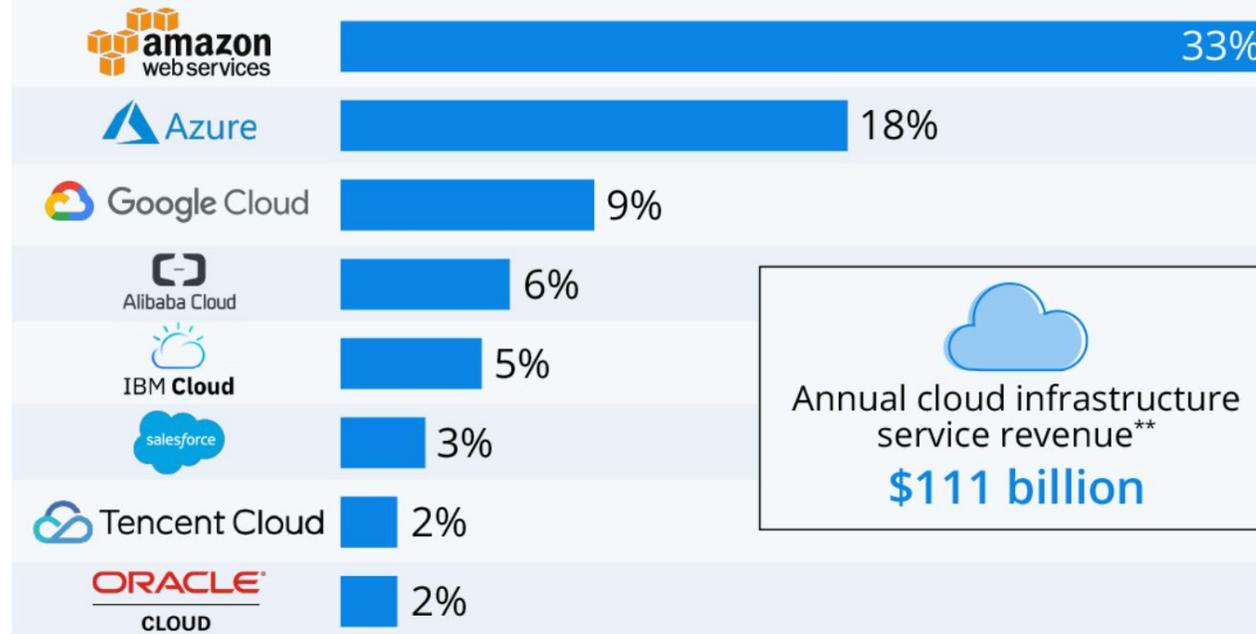
Quick question:

What is the cloud and who owns it?

Cloud storage simply means that information is stored on remote servers and accessed via the internet. There's little transparency in the systems used to back up data.

(In the analog world, it was much easier to see and keep track of what you have.)

Worldwide market share of leading cloud infrastructure service providers in Q2 2020*



* includes platform as a service (PaaS) and infrastructure as a service (IaaS) as well as hosted private cloud services

** 12 months ended June 30, 2020

Source: Synergy Research Group

Who owns the cloud?

To recap:

- Storage media become obsolete. Hardware and software change over time.
- The cloud offers little in the way of long-term safeguards or transparency.
- Read the fine print: Social media sites may hold on to your content forever, but they don't promise to preserve it. (R.I.P MySpace)

How to navigate the digital world

TO KEEP YOUR WORK SAFE

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Recap

What are the two major obstacles to overcome when archiving digital files?

(dis)organization and obsolescence.

Get organized

A FEW SIMPLE STEPS

Identify what you want to save (emails, papers, photos, etc.) and decide what is most important to you. **Prioritize. Curate.**



Ask yourself: Do I need hundreds of photos of the same subject? Numerous near-identical files?

Tips:

- Use meaningful names that identify content
- Include the date in the file name
- Avoid spaces and *most* special characters.
- For readability, capitalize. It's also OK to use underscore and hyphen

Combating obsolescence

A COUPLE TIPS...

Save files in stable, non-proprietary formats such as .pdf, .jpg, or .tif. Word, for example, is a proprietary software program produced by Microsoft. PDFs or plain text files are safer.

Actively manage your archive. Check files once a year to see if they're readable.

It's a good idea to check files when you get new software or a new operating system.

Back up multiple copies of your files on a variety of media, and store in multiple locations.

Follow the **3-2-1** rule:

- Make **three** copies.
- Store **two** on different types of media (but not rewritable media).
- Store **one** in a different location.

Some of this can be automated:

Time Machine: Automatically backs up to an external hard drive (for Mac)

Carbonite and Backblaze: Automatically back up to the cloud

- A local copy (on your computer)
- An external copy (an external hard drive)
- An online copy (cloud storage)

Which of these is an example of a proprietary format?

- a) .tif
- b) .pdf
- c) .docx
- d) .jpeg
- e) None of the above

- a) .tif
- b) .pdf
- c) .docx**
- d) .jpeg
- e) None of the above

Other threats

THERE'S AN INCENTIVE FOR BAD PEOPLE TO TARGET YOUR ARCHIVE

Hackers and viruses can wreak havoc both on your desktop and in the cloud. Cyber criminals like targeting the kind of sensitive information found in emails.

If possible, use 2-step authentication.

Use strong passwords (long strings of words), don't reuse passwords, change them often. (You may wish to try a password manager.)

User agreements tend to absolve services (such as Facebook) of all preservation responsibility.

To keep data secure:

- Enable automatic updates on your computer and web browser to keep your system secure and up-to-date.
- Install anti-virus software. (Rowan IRT has suggestions)
- Back up your work in the cloud (e.g., Google Drive). Be careful about shared documents, though!

For more tips go to:

<https://irt.rowan.edu/security/checklist.html>

Tips for images and sound

AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS PRESENT CHALLENGES

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To enhance organization, add metadata. (For example, add tags to photos with photo editing software.)

Keep the best-quality originals of photos, audio, and video. You don't want to rely on compressed "lossy" files. (Missing pixels can never be replaced once removed.) Photos are compressed for use on web pages, which is why you shouldn't consider Facebook as an online photo album.

Using an external hard drive for storage is helpful.

Tips for email and texts

ORGANIZATION AND ACCESS

You can start the process of properly storing emails as you create them: When you write an email, think of the subject line as metadata or a tag. If it makes intuitive sense to you, you'll be able to use it to retrieve an email via search.

Important emails should be saved on a hard drive or storage disk using a non-proprietary format.

Using the archiving feature in Outlook or Gmail can help you save storage space in your inbox (and therefore keep you from needing to unnecessarily delete emails).

← REPLY ALL

→ FORWARD



Reply by IM

Reply all by IM

Delete

Categorize



Mark as junk

Open in a separate window

Print

Create rule...

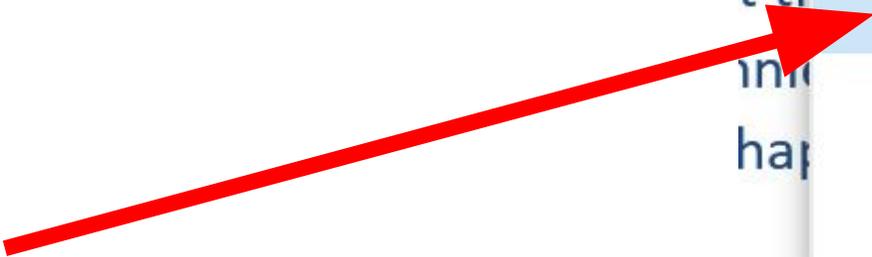
View message details

vi, M

t th

inc

hap



General

Select Printer

-  CMSRU Library HpColor553
-  Fax
-  Hewlett-Packard hp LaserJet 2420
-  Microsoft Print to PDF
-  Microsoft XPS Document W
-  OneNote for Windows 10



Status: Ready

Print to file

Preferences

Location:

Comment:

Find Printer...

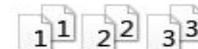
Page Range

- All
- Selection
- Current Page
- Pages:

Enter page numbers and/or page ranges separated by commas. For example,

Number of copies: 1

Collate



Print

Cancel

Apply

Info

Open & Export

Save As

Save as Adobe
PDF

Save Attachments

In the desktop version of Outlook, use the “File” dropdown menu to save an email as a PDF or as a plain text file.

Texts were not really designed for permanence, but important texts can be saved easily with screenshots. Various apps can help save and store messages for the long term. (See resource list.)

Exercise #1

Save an email

Tips for social media and web pages

Decide how permanent you want your web presence to be

Take screenshots of important tweets and posts.

Check the platform's FAQ. For example, both Facebook and Twitter offer tips for archiving.

Read the terms of service to see what a service's legal stance is.

Use the “print” feature to save PDFs of individual web pages.

Go to archive.org to use internet Archive’s “Save Page Now” feature. Save every page and keep track of the url of each page.

Save Page Now

Capture a web page as it appears now for use as a trusted citation in the future.

SAVE

Exercise #2

Name (or rename) a file using preservation best practices. When you're done, copy and paste the file name into the chat.

Exercise #3

Back up this file by saving it in the cloud.

Tips for your long term legacy

DON'T NEGLECT THE FUTURE

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Leave passwords and instructions to a digital executor.
(There are password managers that provide this service).

Just because someone is your designated executor or your heir, does not mean that the person will be able to gain access to your accounts.

Final question:

If I want to not just save but preserve this presentation,
what should I do?

Resources

General Information

<http://digitalpreservation.gov/education/index.html>

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/preserving/1.php>

http://soga.org/Resources/Documents/Outreach/PDAWorkshopPresentation_20140731.pdf

[*Managing the Digital You: Where and How to Keep and Organize Your Digital Life* by Melody Condron](#)

[*Personal Archiving*, Donald T. Hawkins, ed. \(See Chapter 4, “Software and Services for Personal Archiving”](#)

Ala.org/alcts/preservationweek/howto/digital-preservation-tips

http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/documents/ebookpdf_march18.pdf

<http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/padKit/handouts.html>

http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/documents/PA_All_brochure.pdf

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/preserving/1.php>

<http://www.worldbackupday.com/en/>

Audiovisual

<http://blogs.loc.gov/thesignal/2011/10/mission-possible-an-easy-way-to-add-descriptions-to-digital-photos/http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/audio.html>

<http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/documents/video-transfer.pdf>

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/digitizing/6.php>

Rowan-specific

https://banner9.rowan.edu/ords/ssb/!ROWANSSB.ROWAN_ANNOUNCER.p_view?sub_id=25005

<https://irt.rowan.edu/security/checklist.html>

Social Media

https://www.americanbar.org/publications/blt/2014/01/02_dibianca.html

Analog to Digital

http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/documents/scanning_collections.pdf

Ala.org/alcts/preservationweek/howto/digital-preservation-tips

<http://natlib.govt.nz/collections/caring-for-your-collections/sound-recordings>

<http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/documents/video-transfer.pdf>

Digital Afterlife

http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/documents/ebookpdf_march18.pdf

<http://www.thedigitalbeyond.com>

Your Digital Afterlife by Evan Carroll and John Romano

<https://www2.archivists.org/publications/brochures/donating-familyrecs>

Best File Formats for Storage

<https://loc.gov/preservation/resources/rfs/RFS%202020-2021.pdf>

The Cloud

<https://www.srgresearch.com/articles/microsoft-google-and-ibm-charge-public-cloud-expense-smaller-providers>

<http://www.computerworld.com/article/2500640/data-center/data-center-5-online-backup-services-keep-your-data-safe.html>

Email and Texts

<http://www.popsoci.com/how-to-save-your-text-messages>

<http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/email.html>

<https://mobisocial.stanford.edu/muse/tipsheet.html>