Stories of Impact:
the Value and Impact of Digital Collections

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Focusing on Digitized Anthropological Collections
Five Considerations

- Distinctiveness of ethnographic collections
- Identifying areas for assessment
- Traditional and emergent uses and users of collections
- Institutional effects of digitization
- Accounting for various stakeholders

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Defining Impact

“The measurable outcomes arising from the existence of a digital resource that demonstrate a change in the life or life opportunities of the community for which the resource is intended.”

(Simon Tanner 2012)
What Changes to Care About

- Relationships
- Learning
- Affect (for ethnographic collections cultural sensitivity)
- Institutional priorities

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Change For

- **Whom?**
  - General public
  - Researchers
  - Students
  - Teachers

- **At what level?**
  - Individual
  - Society
  - Community
  - Institution

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Building on Previous Efforts

- Simon Tanner’s (2012) Balanced Value Impact Model
- TIDSR: Toolkit for the Impact of Digitised Scholarly Resources (http://microsites.oii.ox.ac.uk/tidsr/)
- E-Metrics (Fraser, McClure, & Leahy 2002)
- UKOLN’s framework for metrics for JISC programs (Kelly 2012)
What are the concrete areas of impact when providing access to digitized anthropological archives?

What measures or outcomes are most useful in assessing the value of digitization initiatives?

How can these impacts be appropriately assessed?
Method

- Phone interviews, followed by site visits and face-to-face interviews
- From January to March 2014
- 57 respondents from 8 institutions
- Experts’ workshop in April 2014
Digitization Projects in …

- Smithsonian Institutions:
  - National Anthropological Archives
  - National Museum of Natural History – Department of Anthropology
  - Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage
  - National Museum of the American Indian

- American Museum of Natural History (New York, NY)

- Harvard’s Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology (Cambridge, MA)

- University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (Philadelphia, PA)

- American Philosophical Society (Philadelphia, PA)

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Barriers

- Lack of a culture of assessment
- No ethos of “evidence-based” practice
- Mismatch between the data we have and what we want to measure
- Unclear project goals
## Story Types and Narrative Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Institutional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metrics</td>
<td>Metrics story about audience impacts, e.g. at Thanksgiving our number of hits goes up</td>
<td>Metrics story about institutional impacts, e.g. our educational reach is increasing because permissions for textbooks has gone up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>Singular story about audience impacts, e.g. digitization has facilitated a specific tribe's language revitalization</td>
<td>Singular story about institutional impacts, e.g. we've changed our protocols to better suit Indigenous needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Abstract story about audience impacts, e.g. researchers have better and more efficient visits</td>
<td>Abstract story about institutional impacts, e.g. we've forged closer relationships with communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Stories and Impact

1. Knowledge—the educational aspect; learning; broader knowledge of communities/topics

Indicators: what programs are in place? -where are materials being used in education (formal or informal) settings? . . . Health?
Stories and Impact

2. Discourse—broader literature, professional cultures

Indicators: how terms/language/objects/images being used in literatures, conferences, sites, blogs, across platforms
Stories and Impact

3. Attitudes—feelings, emotions, positions toward objects or communities

Indicators (community): how objects being used, where objects are circulating or being repurposed

Indicators (non-community): how objects being used/circulating in non-community contexts

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4. Capacity—Institutional/community resources and agency to carryout uses, promote discourses or knowledge

Indicators: institutional or resource growth around digital resources/collections, assets
Stories and Impact

5. Policy—shifts in governmental or institutional appropriations, regulations, laws regarding digital community assets

Indicators: documents, increased pools of funding/institutional support
A Collaborative Research Project

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College of Information Studies:

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🌟 Brian Butler, Ph.D.
🌟 Massimo Petrozzi, Ph.D.

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🌟 Robert Leopold, Ph.D.
🌟 Diana Marsh

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Thank you.

Questions?

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