

# **The Fundamentals of Preserving Knowledge Assets: USC's Dual Approach to Digital Services and Physical Collections**

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For academic research libraries, questions of media and format are never issues of either-or. We make acquisition and preservation decisions based on scholarly value, historical significance, and importance to our research communities. Questions of media are secondary to considerations of relevance and meaning.

At USC we are taking a dual approach to preserving, providing access to, and enabling discovery of relevant knowledge assets in all forms. First, we are collaborating with USC Information Technology Services and the USC Shoah Foundation Institute to create the USC Digital Repository. By extending the Shoah Foundation's digital-preservation capacity to include USC and private-sector digital collections and by enabling global access through USC's high-performance network, the USC Digital Repository will provide preservation services while creating a platform for advanced research and teaching using digital knowledge assets.

However, digital services remain dependent on physical objects—in terms of the fragility of storage media such as tapes, discs, and server arrays, as well as with respect to the books, manuscripts, and other physical artifacts that retain tremendous research value, even as digital representations make their content more accessible. As the second aspect of USC's dual approach to preserving knowledge assets, we have begun planning the construction of an automated storage and retrieval facility. This facility will allow us to preserve physical storage media for digital assets—such as the Shoah Foundation's original, taped recordings of survivor testimonies—in addition to valuable special collections materials.

This presentation will outline our strategies for enabling students, faculty, and researchers at USC and around the world to teach, learn, and discover in the digital environment while ensuring proper preservation of the physical collections upon which our digital services are based. It will include examples of integrating digital knowledge assets into teaching and learning activities as well as examples of applying the cataloging and metadata expertise of the libraries to improve accessibility of digital collections across the university.