

COLLECTIONS AS DATA

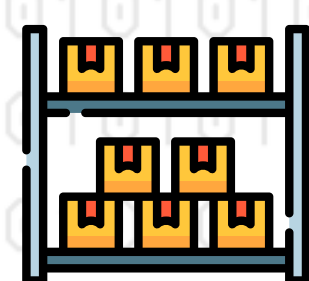
Building a Framework for George Mason University Special Collections



PROJECT OVERVIEW

We evaluated and recommended updates to the George Mason University (GMU) Special Collections Research Center's (SCRC) standard operating procedures to integrate "Collections as Data" (CaD) methodologies. We also liaised with the SCRC and GMU's Digital Scholarship Center (DiSC) to help build a strategic partnership that will enable computational analysis and digital scholarship with SCRC materials.

These changes will benefit both GMU's library and researchers by allowing staff and patrons to analyze cultural heritage collections in new ways. Ongoing marketing of the project will increase interest in SCRC collections, specifically from digital scholars. Additionally, making collections related to under-represented communities more accessible has the potential to inspire people to look at history in a new way and from a new perspective.



BACKGROUND

What is CaD?

"Collections as data" or CaD is ordered information that is stored digitally and amenable to computation.

CaD goes beyond digitizing materials and allows researchers to interact with cultural heritage collections that support computationally-driven research and teaching.

GMU SCRC

The GMU SCRC provides research assistance and services related to the preservation and access of rare and primary source materials. The SCRC uses ArchivesSpace to manage its archival information and LUNA to curate its digitized collections.

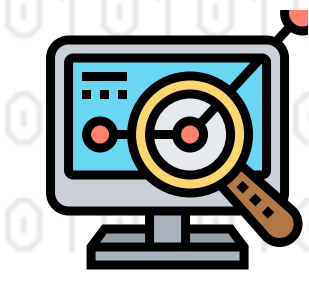
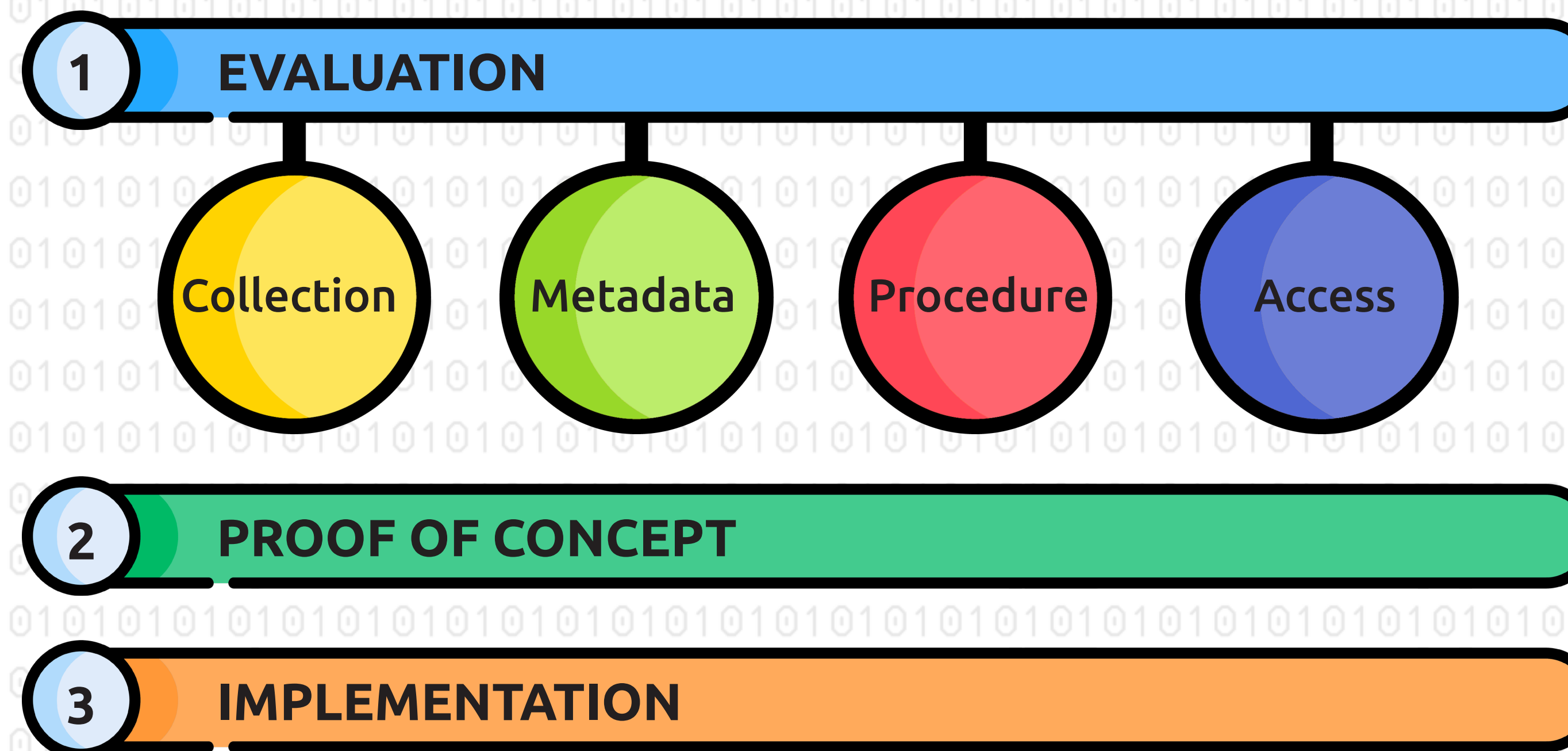
Digital Humanities

At the most basic level, digital humanities refers to the use of digital tools and methods to further scholarship.

As digital humanities projects become more complex, they involve reimagining the way one approaches data, research, narrative, and the publication and interpretation of scholarship.



PROCESS

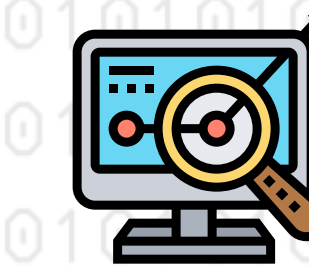
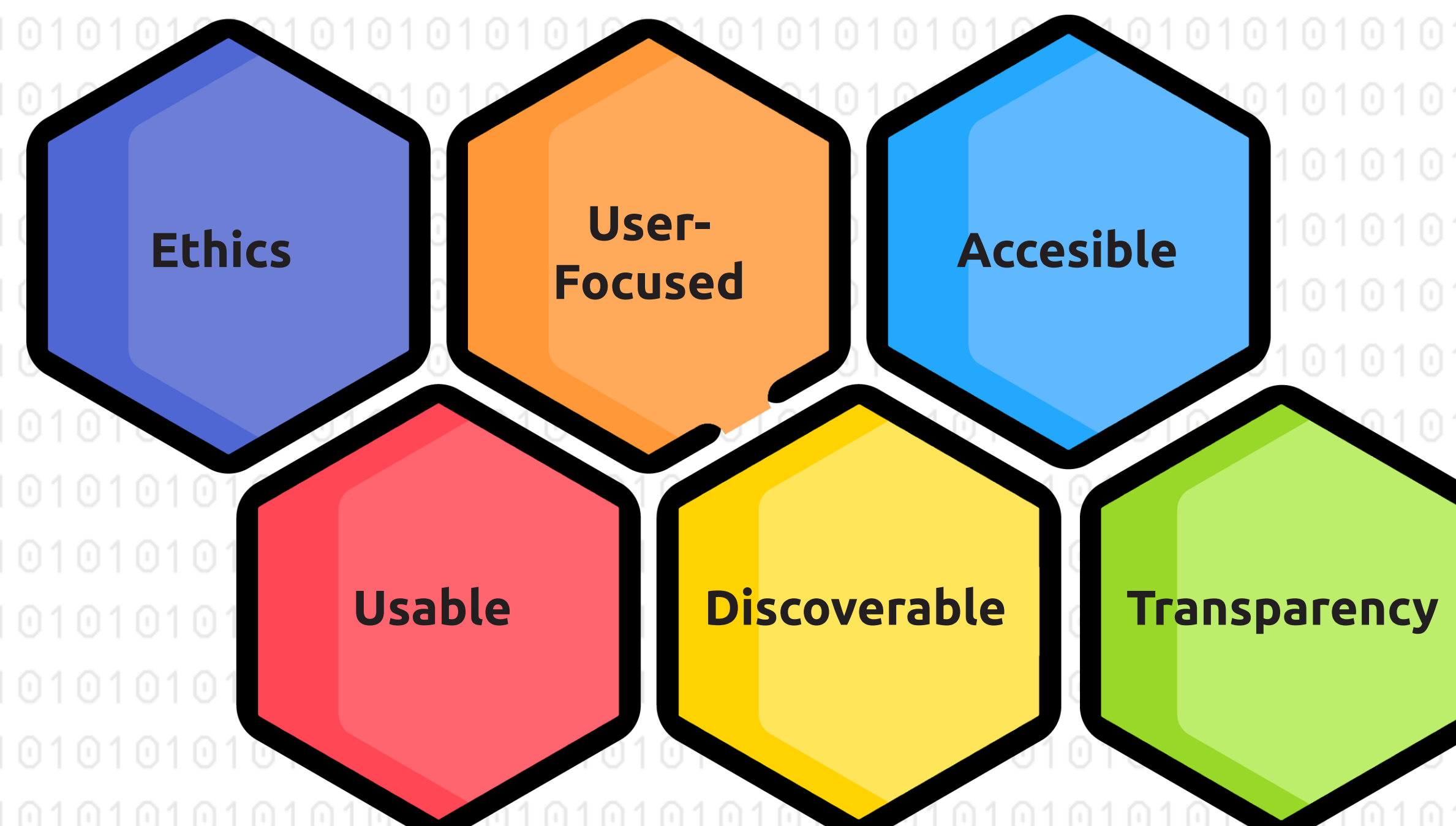


FINDINGS

CaD and DACS

Descriptive Archives: A Content Standard (DACS) provides an established set of rules for describing archival collections of any material type. In 2019, the DACS principles, which shape the archival profession's practices and demonstrate its basic values, were amended.

A side-by-side comparison of the DACS and CaD principles demonstrates that these concepts are guided by the same underlying ideas, highlighted herein. These shared principles show that rather than being competing ideologies, archival description and CaD are just different expressions of the same foundational principles of archival best practices.



FINDINGS CONT.

Implementing CaD

- Modify workflows when accessioning/digitizing materials to identify collections that lend themselves to CaD projects.
- Work with DiSC to manage the implementation of CaD projects.
- Develop plan of action to establish repository for collection data with digital preservation and reproducibility in mind

Next Steps

- Deliver written report to SCRC with recommended action items.
- Present findings to SCRC staff by conference, with a Q&A session.
- Schedule periodic, ongoing meetings between SCRC and DiSC to implement framework recommendations and identify projects.



SELECTED LITERATURE

Always Already Computational. (2019). *Collections as data facets*. Retrieved from: <https://collectionsasdata.github.io/facet7/>

George Mason University Digital Scholarship Center. (2020). *Digital scholarship*. Retrieved from: <https://infoguides.gmu.edu/digitalhumanities>

SAA. (2019). *Describing Archives: A Content Standard, Preface*. https://saa-ts-dacs.github.io/dacs/02_preface.html



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