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Digital curation and its effects on higher education and academic honesty

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INTRODUCTION

With increasing amounts of data being created in digital format, there must be a method by which to effectively collect and synthesize this information for use (Abbott, 2008). To accomplish this, researchers are turning to digital curation, a process that preserves collections and databases while adding a degree of value to the material (Beagrie, 2006). It encourages the use of tools to migrate data and metadata to ensure the information remains meaningful to users.

Digital curation is not only beneficial to researchers, but to students within higher education as well (Abbott, 2008). However these benefits do not come without disadvantages. It is possible that students' efforts to utilize digital curation could become counterproductive because they compromise academic honesty (Lynch, 2003). Data ownership is complex as no individual holds exclusive rights to materials. Managing these rights can be challenging, threatening the authenticity of the record; i.e. allowing a technologically savvy student to manipulate an article (Pennock, 2006). The introduction of digital repositories into institutes of higher education presents a critical need for The University of Texas at Tyler to ensure academic honesty. This poster will propose initiatives as well as explain how, through academic policies already in place, data curation can be effectively utilized and the scholarship of our university maintained.

EXPLORATORY RESEARCH QUESTION

What is digital curation and how has it been utilized in higher education?

Do The University of Texas at Tyler's current academic policies provide for ethical student usage of digital curation?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this exploratory study, the researcher utilized library databases as well as the Google™ search engine to locate scholarly and contemporary online resources for digital curation. Search terms included *digital curation*, *digital preservation*, *digital creation*, *academic honesty*, and *higher education*.

EVOLUTION OF DIGITAL CURATION

In 2012, approximately 2.5 quintillion (2,500,000,000,000,000,000) bytes of data were created every day. This is such an influx in production that approximately 90% of the world's data was created in the last two years alone (Kennedy, 2012). **See Figure 1** for a description of some of the types of data being generated.

Escalating rates of information being created necessitates a medium through which to preserve it. Electronic devices used to store media, such as the floppy disk, CD-ROM, flash drive, and DVD evolve and fall out of use, meaning that information on these devices will soon be inaccessible (Beagrie, 2006). Digital curation seeks to create databases that provide enduring information infrastructures for digital materials. Along with training professionals to maintain the databases, this will enable the repositories to continuously update, so the data do not become obsolete.

FIGURE 1
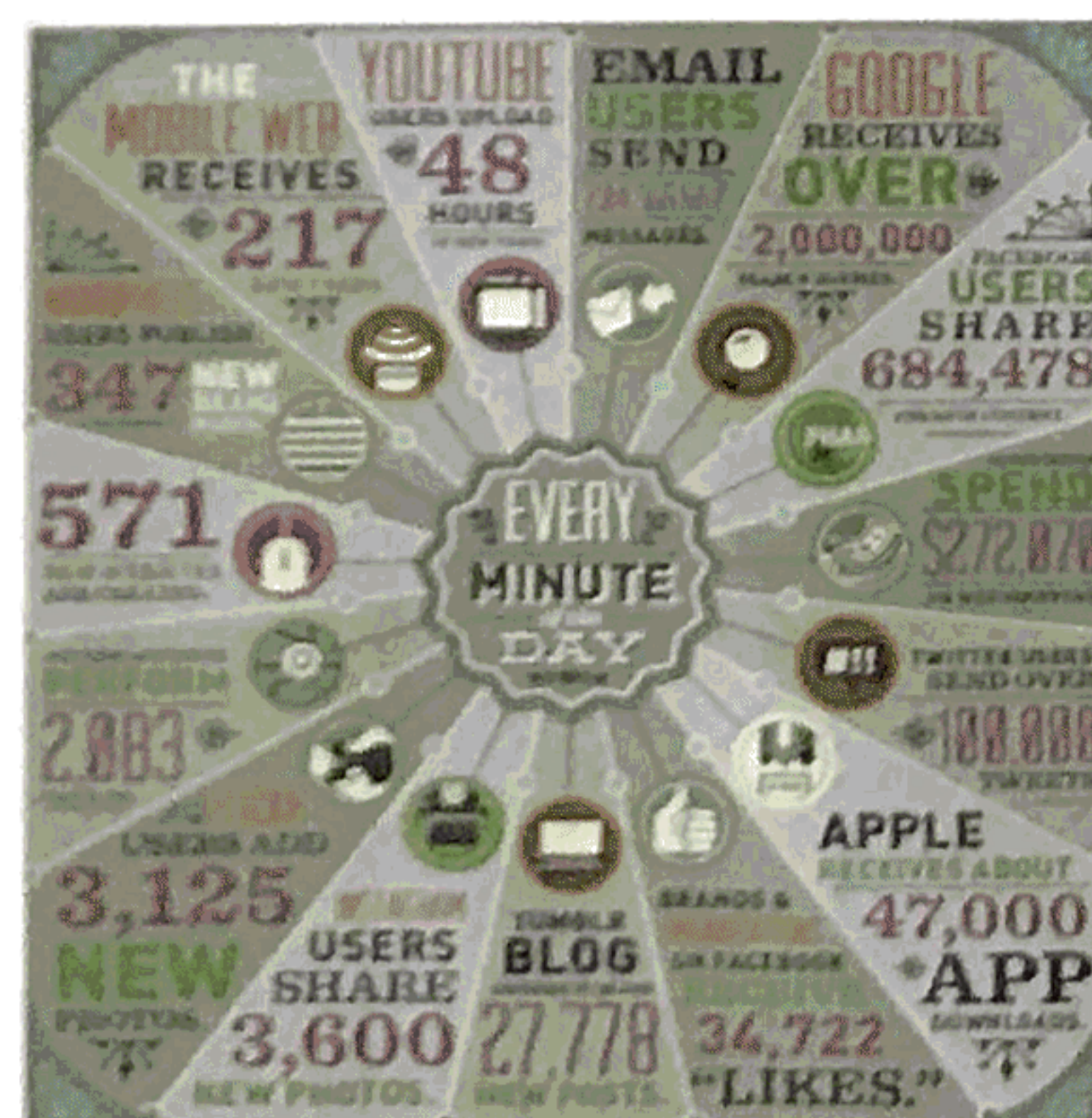
(Adapted from James, 2012)

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Digital curation is not only the preservation and generation of scholarly articles but also the utilization of social media to spread collected content and enable other users to suggest additional content or provide comments/critical evaluation to the collected content (Antonio, Martin & Stagg, 2012). The social media sites individuals within higher education are encouraged to utilize include: Storify, Pearltrees, Pinterest, and Scoop.it. **See Figure 2** for an example of using Pinterest in a higher education setting.

Storify is a social network service that lets the user create stories or timelines using social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. For example, journalism students could use Storify to depict a current story as a series of images and social media posts to engage a wider, authentic readership. Additionally, political science students could map an election and responses to policy in this format.

Pearltrees is a visual and collaborative tool that allows users to collect, organize, and share any URL they find online as well as upload personal photos and notes. For instance, philosophy students could evaluate and visually organize disparate web resources for assessment tasks. Furthermore, tutors can curate and build a visual representation of resources in their subject area.

Pinterest is a pinboard-style photo sharing website that allows users to create and manage theme-based image collections. It could allow visual arts students to create a portfolio showcasing their work whilst gathering inspiration from others or enable human resource development students to create a group repository of knowledge.

Scoop.it is a curation service that allows users to collect information about a topic of interest and display it all on one attractive visual page. Literature students could utilize Scoop.it to filter and synthesize web content, creating an annotated bibliography. Moreover, marketing students could explore brand image and social media marketing strategies.

FIGURE 2

(Screenshot from HRD3312 – UT Tyler's Pinterest page)

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS (CONT'D)

Digital curation encourages students to locate many sources online. However, in this process it is possible that students could archive the work as their own. The University of Texas at Tyler broadly defines academic dishonesty as "…submission, as one's own work of material that is not one's own. As a general rule, scholastic dishonesty involves one of the following acts: cheating, plagiarism, collusion and/or falsifying academic records."

Online resources can be manipulated and, with current policies, it is impossible to track these changes. The University must then establish a database that would allow professors to locate the original source of information, as well as install preventative measures to ensure the data is not distorted.

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