

03 novembre 2026
Grande Bibliothèque de Montréal
05

Transformations & Leadership

Stewarding the digital: *What is a digital asset register and how can it be part of your libraries' digital transformation*

Jessica Lange, Melissa Pipe, Alisa Rod | Université McGill

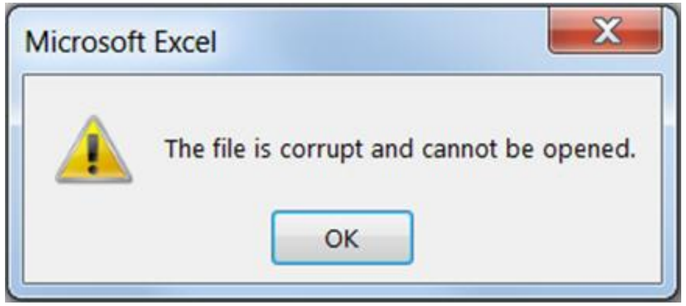
CPI congrès des professionnel·le·s de l'information

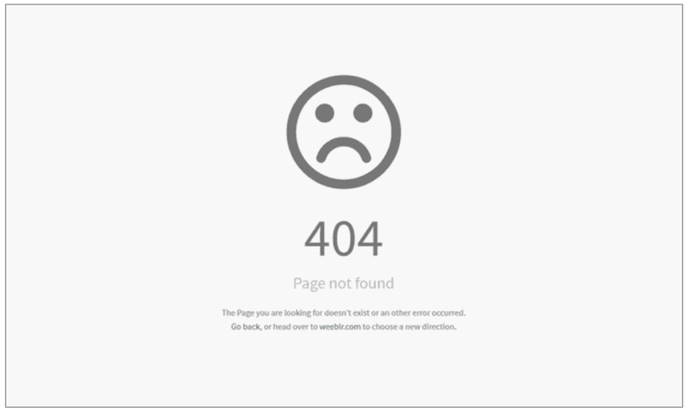
Digital preservation

“Digital preservation refers to the series of managed activities necessary to ensure continued access to digital materials for as long as necessary.”

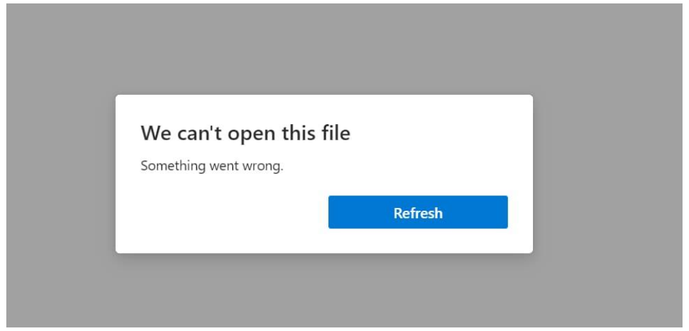
-Digital Preservation Coalition

Digital preservation

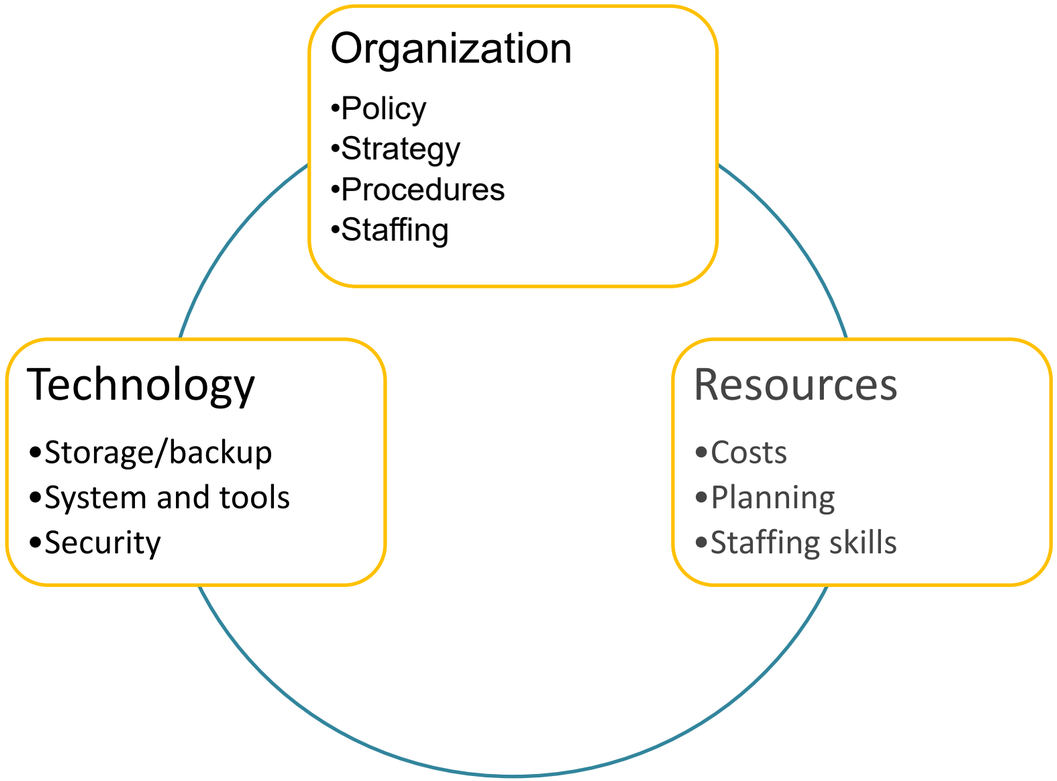








3 areas of digital preservation:



Credit:3-Legged Stool, DPM Model: Digital Preservation Coalition

But before we could start on all of that...

We needed to know what we even had!

For the digital preservation nerds here = Level 1 of the NDSA's guidance on digital preservation "Know your content"



Enter the Digital Asset Register (DAR)

- Inventory of your digital content to facilitate its management
- High-level summary
- Captures information like file size, format
- Adapted from the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC)
  - See Toolkit

Benefits of a DAR

One stop shop

Centralized means to capture information about your digital objects

No more "this information lives in X person's head"



Helps prioritize

Seeing objects side by side can help identify objects that might need immediate attention



Identifies responsibility

Who manages these objects?



Assists in advocacy

Global view of objects, their risks, scope, and scale.

Answers the question "how much do we have and how at risk is it?"



How did we get started?

- **Struck a group with these deliverables:**
  - Create a template for a digital asset register
  - Fill out a digital asset register
  - Make recommendations for preservation priorities of content areas
  - Identify high-priority items for which an immediate intervention is necessary
  - Establish a knowledge management framework for the digital asset register (e.g., use of intranet, Sharepoint etc.).

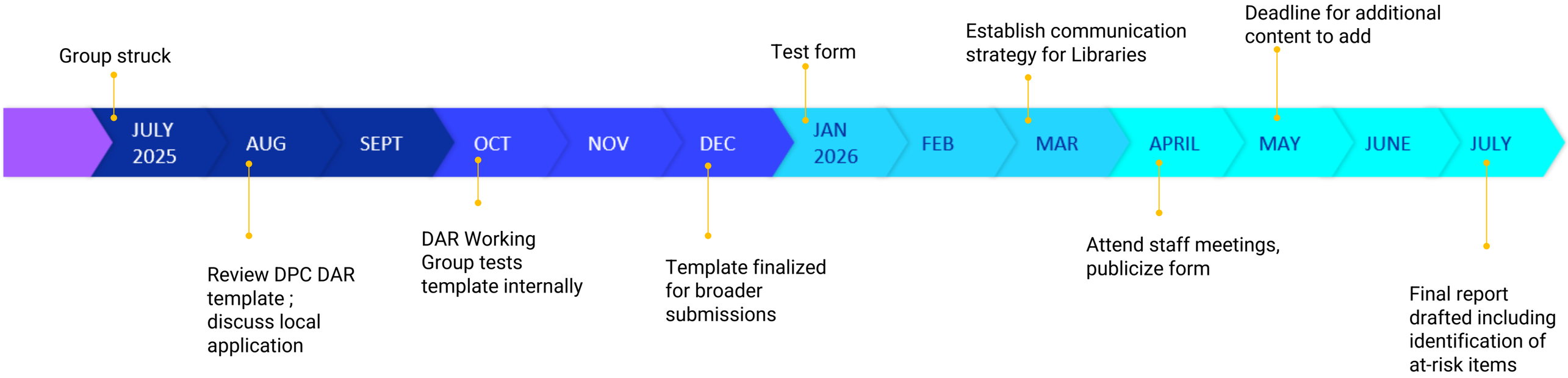
More about this group

- **Representatives from multiple units:**
  - Collection Services
  - Research & Scholarship
  - Library Technology
  - Marvin Duchow Music Library
  - Rare Books and Special Collections

Shout out to!

Anna Dysert
Greg Houston
Melissa Pipe
Tellina Liu
Alisa Rod
Nailisa Tanner

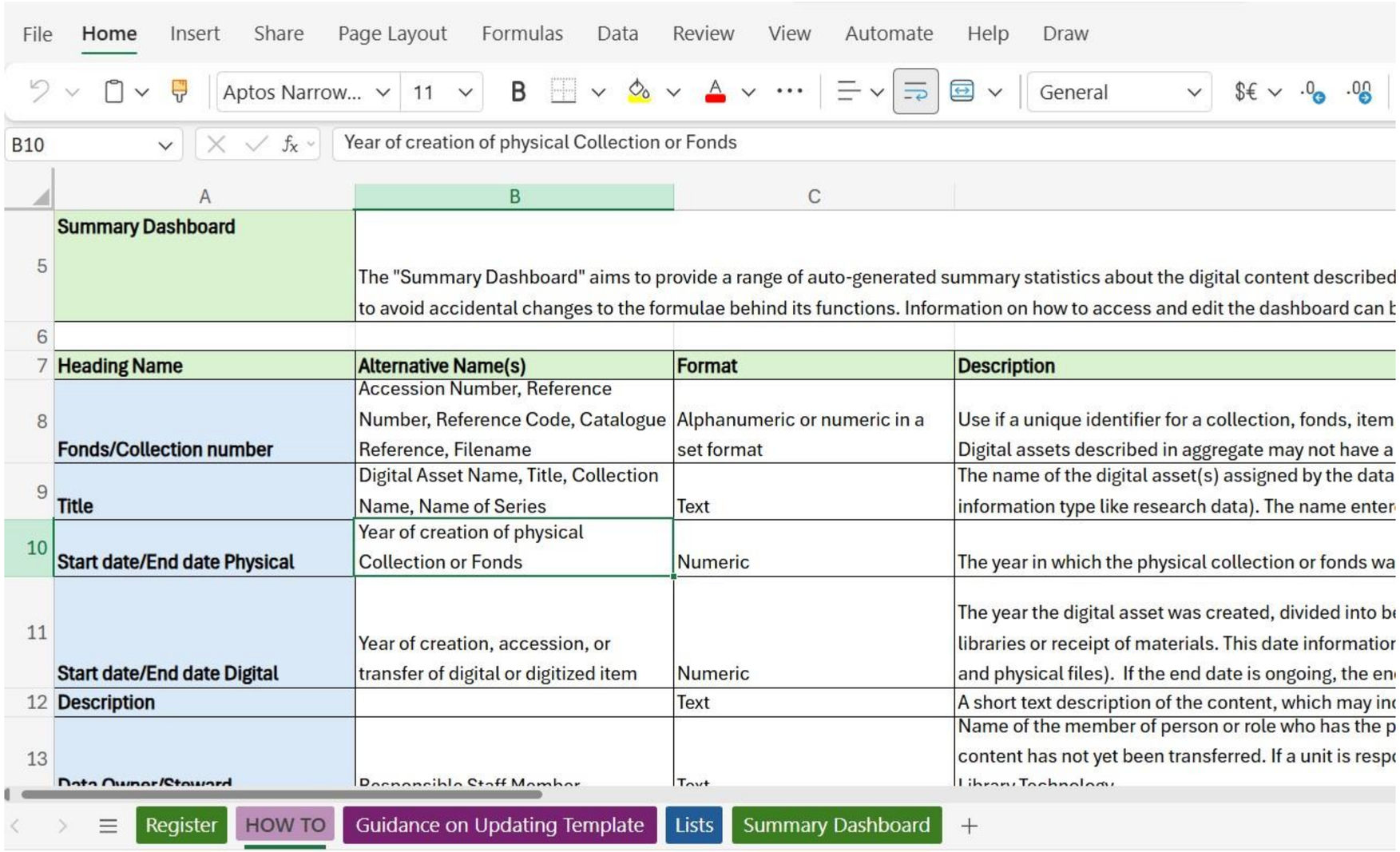
Timeline


Group struck
JULY 2025
AUG
SEPT
OCT
NOV
DEC
JAN 2026
FEB
MAR
APRIL
MAY
JUNE
JULY
Review DPC DAR template ; discuss local application
DAR Working Group tests template internally
Template finalized for broader submissions
Test form
Establish communication strategy for Libraries
Attend staff meetings, publicize form
Deadline for additional content to add
Final report drafted including identification of at-risk items

Template

- Use the DPC Digital Asset Register Toolkit as a base model for our template: https://www.dpconline.org/digipres/implement-digipres/dar-toolkit/dar-template
- Reviewing and adapting fields and updating definitions
- Combination of fillable and drop-down.

Template



File Home Insert Share Page Layout Formulas Data Review View Automate Help Draw

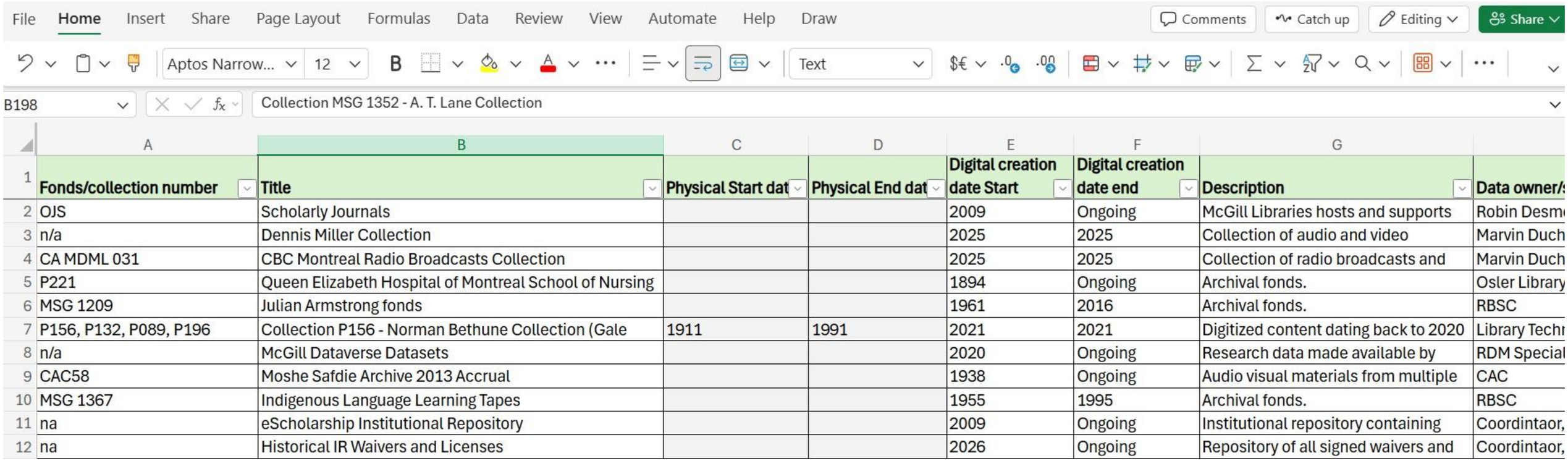
Aptos Narrow... 11 General

B10 Year of creation of physical Collection or Fonds

	A	B	C	
5	**Summary Dashboard**	The "Summary Dashboard" aims to provide a range of auto-generated summary statistics about the digital content described to avoid accidental changes to the formulae behind its functions. Information on how to access and edit the dashboard can b		
6				
7	**Heading Name**	**Alternative Name(s)**	**Format**	**Description**
8	**Fonds/Collection number**	Accession Number, Reference Number, Reference Code, Catalogue Reference, Filename	Alphanumeric or numeric in a set format	Use if a unique identifier for a collection, fonds, item Digital assets described in aggregate may not have a
9	**Title**	Digital Asset Name, Title, Collection Name, Name of Series	Text	The name of the digital asset(s) assigned by the data information type like research data). The name enter
10	**Start date/End date Physical**	Year of creation of physical Collection or Fonds	Numeric	The year in which the physical collection or fonds wa
11	**Start date/End date Digital**	Year of creation, accession, or transfer of digital or digitized item	Numeric	The year the digital asset was created, divided into be libraries or receipt of materials. This date informatior and physical files). If the end date is ongoing, the en
12	**Description**		Text	A short text description of the content, which may inc
13	**Data Owner/Steward**	Responsible Staff Member	Text	Name of the member of person or role who has the p content has not yet been transferred. If a unit is respo Library Technology

Register HOW TO Guidance on Updating Template Lists Summary Dashboard

Template



File Home Insert Share Page Layout Formulas Data Review View Automate Help Draw

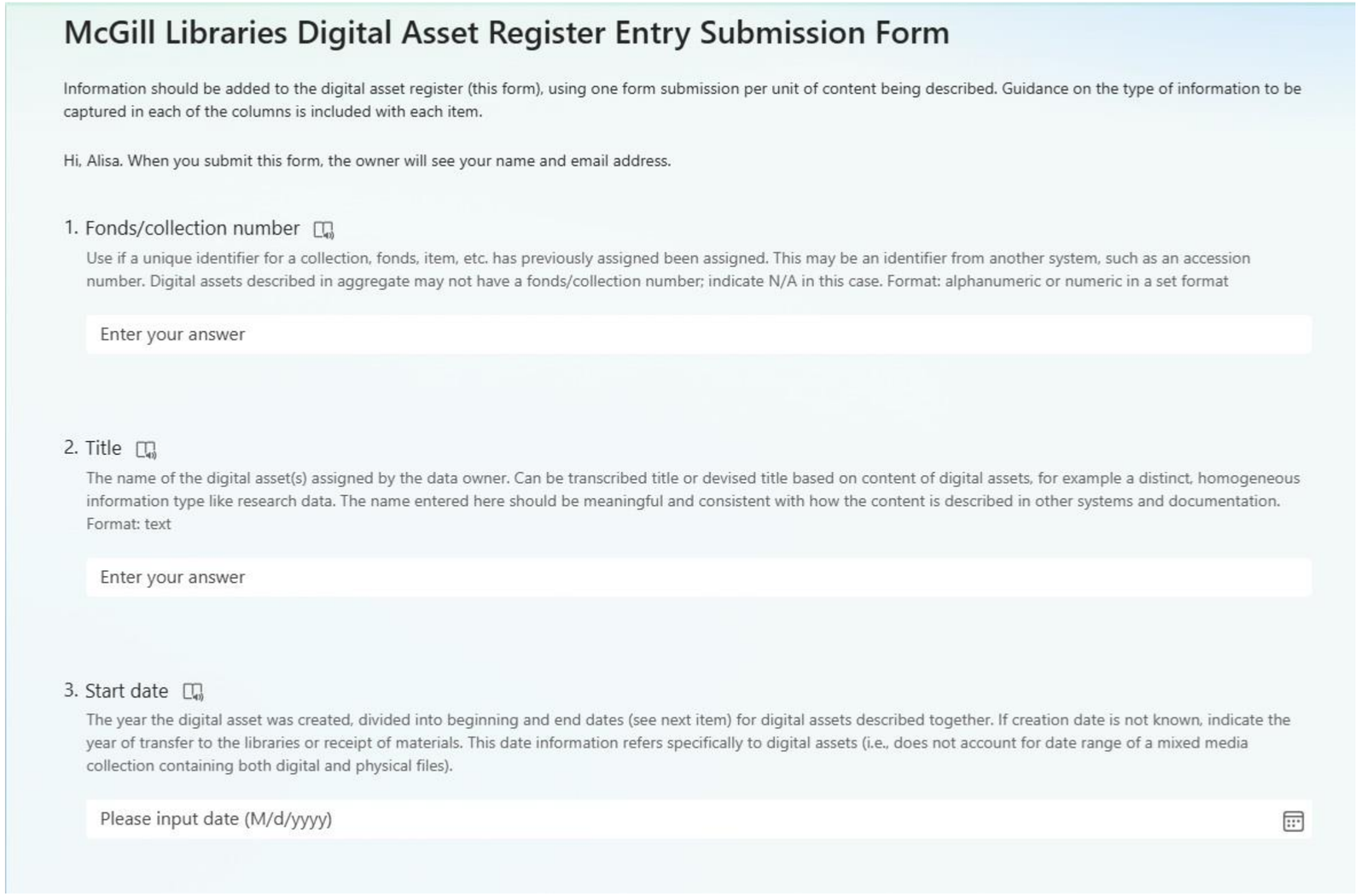
Comments Catch up Editing Share

Aptos Narrow... 12 Text

B198 Collection MSG 1352 - A. T. Lane Collection

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
1	Fonds/collection number	Title	Physical Start dat	Physical End dat	Digital creation date Start	Digital creation date end	Description	Data owner/s
2	OJS	Scholarly Journals			2009	Ongoing	McGill Libraries hosts and supports	Robin Desm
3	n/a	Dennis Miller Collection			2025	2025	Collection of audio and video	Marvin Duch
4	CA MDML 031	CBC Montreal Radio Broadcasts Collection			2025	2025	Collection of radio broadcasts and	Marvin Duch
5	P221	Queen Elizabeth Hospital of Montreal School of Nursing			1894	Ongoing	Archival fonds.	Osler Library
6	MSG 1209	Julian Armstrong fonds			1961	2016	Archival fonds.	RBSC
7	P156, P132, P089, P196	Collection P156 - Norman Bethune Collection (Gale	1911	1991	2021	2021	Digitized content dating back to 2020	Library Techr
8	n/a	McGill Dataverse Datasets			2020	Ongoing	Research data made available by	RDM Special
9	CAC58	Moshe Safdie Archive 2013 Accrual			1938	Ongoing	Audio visual materials from multiple	CAC
10	MSG 1367	Indigenous Language Learning Tapes			1955	1995	Archival fonds.	RBSC
11	na	eScholarship Institutional Repository			2009	Ongoing	Institutional repository containing	Coordintaor,
12	na	Historical IR Waivers and Licenses			2026	Ongoing	Repository of all signed waivers and	Coordintaor,

Form to solicit additional entries



McGill Libraries Digital Asset Register Entry Submission Form

Information should be added to the digital asset register (this form), using one form submission per unit of content being described. Guidance on the type of information to be captured in each of the columns is included with each item.

Hi, Alisa. When you submit this form, the owner will see your name and email address.

1. Fonds/collection number

Use if a unique identifier for a collection, fonds, item, etc. has previously assigned been assigned. This may be an identifier from another system, such as an accession number. Digital assets described in aggregate may not have a fonds/collection number; indicate N/A in this case. Format: alphanumeric or numeric in a set format

Enter your answer

2. Title

The name of the digital asset(s) assigned by the data owner. Can be transcribed title or devised title based on content of digital assets, for example a distinct, homogeneous information type like research data. The name entered here should be meaningful and consistent with how the content is described in other systems and documentation. Format: text

Enter your answer

3. Start date

The year the digital asset was created, divided into beginning and end dates (see next item) for digital assets described together. If creation date is not known, indicate the year of transfer to the libraries or receipt of materials. This date information refers specifically to digital assets (i.e., does not account for date range of a mixed media collection containing both digital and physical files).

Please input date (M/d/yyyy)

In addition to the group reviewing the objects:

- Attended several staff meetings
- Put a general call out for additional items
- Distributed form for people to add objects we may have missed



Photo by Brooke Cagle on Unsplash

Questions that came up:

- Scope!
- What determined if something was a 'unique digital asset' stewarded by McGill?
- What if McGill was the only holding copy for something that was produced externally?
- How do we identify priorities for digital preservation action?



Photo by Brooke Cagle on Unsplash

What did we find?



270 000+ files

7 TB

File formats: pdf, txt, sql, tiff, jpeg, aiff, mp3, wav, mp4, mov, WARC

What did we find?



on-site server, cloud, SharePoint, OneDrive, content server/AtoM



diskettes, usb flash drive, LTO tape, external hard drive, CDs, DVD, MiniDisc

AT-RISK MEDIA

Based on the media type and age of the materials (where known), these media are most likely to be the highest at risk for degradation:

- Hard drives
- USB keys
- Diskettes
- DVD-Rs
- CD-Rs

AT-RISK MEDIA

Future work may include assessing all materials in the digital asset register on:

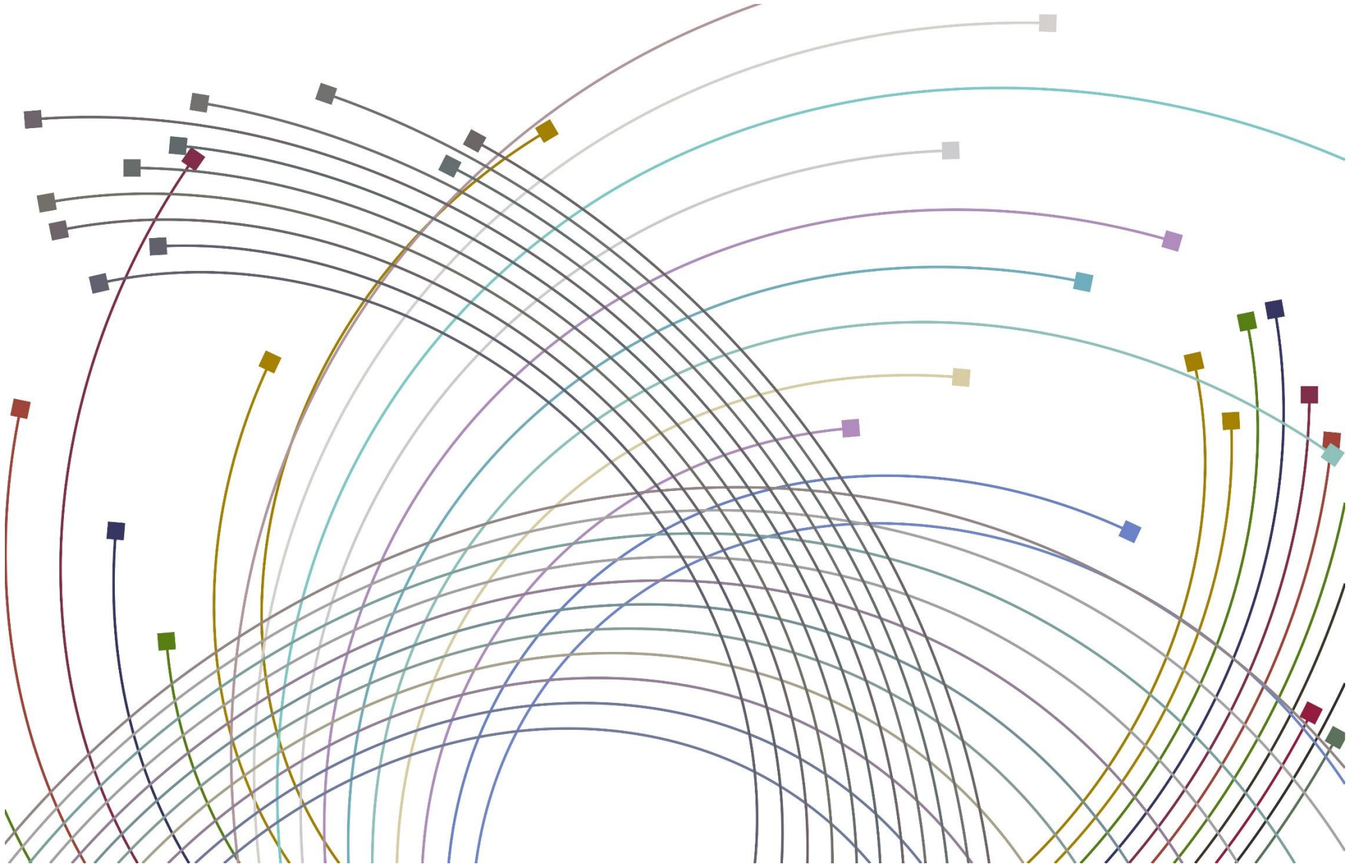
- Uniqueness
- Are we the only copy or one of a few?
- For secondary sources, can it be replaced/still purchased ?
- Institutional commitment
- Is it McGill’s obligation to steward it (e.g., theses)?
- Labour/replacement cost
- Are the costs to replicate it high (e.g., mass digitization projects)?

What has this been good for?

- Conversations with IT
- Knowing the scope of the assets and their size
- Knowledge management: have a single place that identifies where digital objects are across the departments
- Identifying at-risk materials

Photo by Jean-Philippe Delberghe via Unsplash

What's next?



CPI congrès des professionnel·le·s de l'information

Illustration by Public domain vectors on Unsplash

If digital preservation interests you!



iPRES 2027 QUEBEC

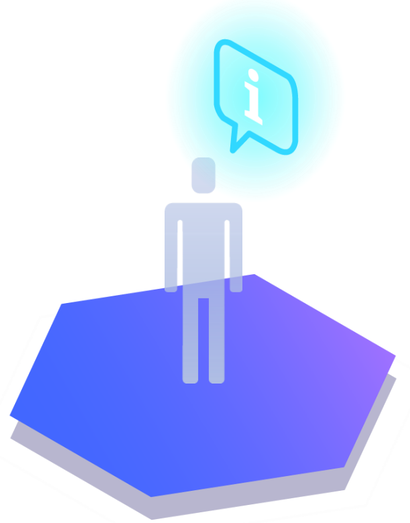
https://ipres2027.ca/

Questions?

Jessica Lange (she/her, Interim Associate Dean, Library Technology)

Melissa Pipe (she/her, Senior Documentation Technician -Audiovisual Archives)

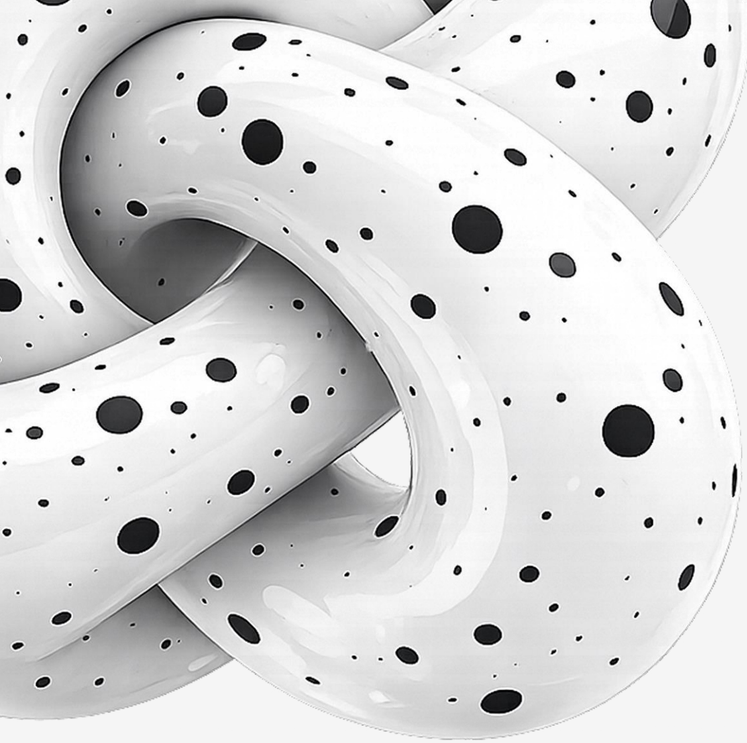
Alisa Rod (she/her, Research Data Management Specialist)



Credits

Special thanks to all the people who made and released these awesome resources for free:

- Presentation template elements by SlidesCarnival
- Photographs by Unsplash



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Transformations & Leadership

Merci !

Questions et échanges

