Development objective:

Please explain what development have you identified and why. Please identify the competency that you think relates to the development.

In 2018 I joined a new employer who had a formal and comprehensive digital preservation programme. This required me to acquire knowledge about born-digital records, the optimum processes for managing digitised records, and to learn how to navigate new software.

B14. Digital curation: preserving born-digital and digitised records and archives.

Development period

The date or dates which the development took place

2018 - present

Development activity

What development activity did you undertake to meet the objective, and what did you learn?
For example, events, training courses, workplace activity and voluntary activity outside the work place.

I had no prior knowledge of the digital preservation processes used by my new employer. During the first six months, I undertook a number of training sessions managed by the Digital Archivist. This included learning how to use Preservica, the relationship with Axiell Calm, how to ingest digitized and born-digital records, how to catalogue these records and how to provide access to the same.

This work has continued as our processes have evolved, so it has been a constant period of learning and development. I have attended external webinars to learn more about activities in the sector, and have recently completed the 'Providing Access to Preserved Digital Content' course provided by the Digital Preservation Coalition.

Reflection

Please give examples to show how you have applied what you have learned. Think about what went well, what didn't go well, and how you will continue to develop.

I now have a good level of knowledge about digital preservation, a huge leap from the position I was in prior to 2018. I am able to collect, accession, appraise and ingest digitised and born-digital records according to recommended standards. I also troubleshoot routine problems when they occur. This has become a standard process, which has allowed me to tackle the backlog of digital content.

I now need to improve my ability to manage large, complex born-digital collections to make sure they are appraised, arranged and structured correctly in the catalogue. The decision-making required doesn't come naturally to me (as it might do with physical collections), due to the sheer volume of records that can sometimes be involved. I therefore have to set aside substantial portions of time to review and compare the records during the appraisal process. I need to concentrate when preparing to ingest the same, to make sure I am making the best choice given the cataloguing and user access requirements associated with the records. I will ask for a second opinion if I am unsure,

but my confidence in this area is growing and this will continue as I receive more digital deposits.

I have put the general skills and knowledge acquired to good use supervising the crawl and ingest of my employer's website. This very technical work has taken me out of my comfort zone, so I identified this as a key learning objective for myself for the first half of the year. This helped me dedicate time to reading, attending webinars and speaking to peers in the sector in order to learn about their own experiences with websites. I used this knowledge to prepare a plan of action composed of small, manageable steps to help monitor my progress and clearly demonstrate to my line manager that I was taking a considered approach to the work. One particular achievement I am proud of, is producing a number of recordings of selected staff website pages, to ensure we have a record of their aesthetic and functionality. This is important, as we do not currently have the ability to render the crawls we create. It will be possible to refer back to the recordings in the future to help provide comparisons to the crawls and confirm their accuracy and limitations (e.g. parts of the page not being accessible).

Digital curation is an ever evolving practice, and I feel the biggest learning I have taken from this development objective is that it will never be 'concluded'. I will always need to be proactive in gaining new knowledge and practical skills, but I feel confident that I have a good foundation to build on and look forward to continuing my development in this area.