

# Digitization is not Digital Preservation

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## Background

More than a question of semantics, **digitization** – or the process of converting analog records to digital – is different from **digital preservation**, which is the practice of safeguarding digital records. Digital preservation is one aspect of **digital curation**, which looks at the overall lifecycle of digital records.

Stockton University has been digitizing materials from Special Collections and University Archives since 2012 and making them available online through a digital repository (currently, CONTENTdm).

However, there is no plan in place for digital preservation of these or other digital records. File formats used for digitization are not appropriate for long-term storage. Adding to the digital woes, born-digital records are not being transferred to Special Collections at all.

With my arrival as Stockton's first professional archivist in Summer 2017, I started to educate colleagues about best practices in digitization. These conversations led to questions about digital curation. Discussions then began with our campus IT office about current practices.

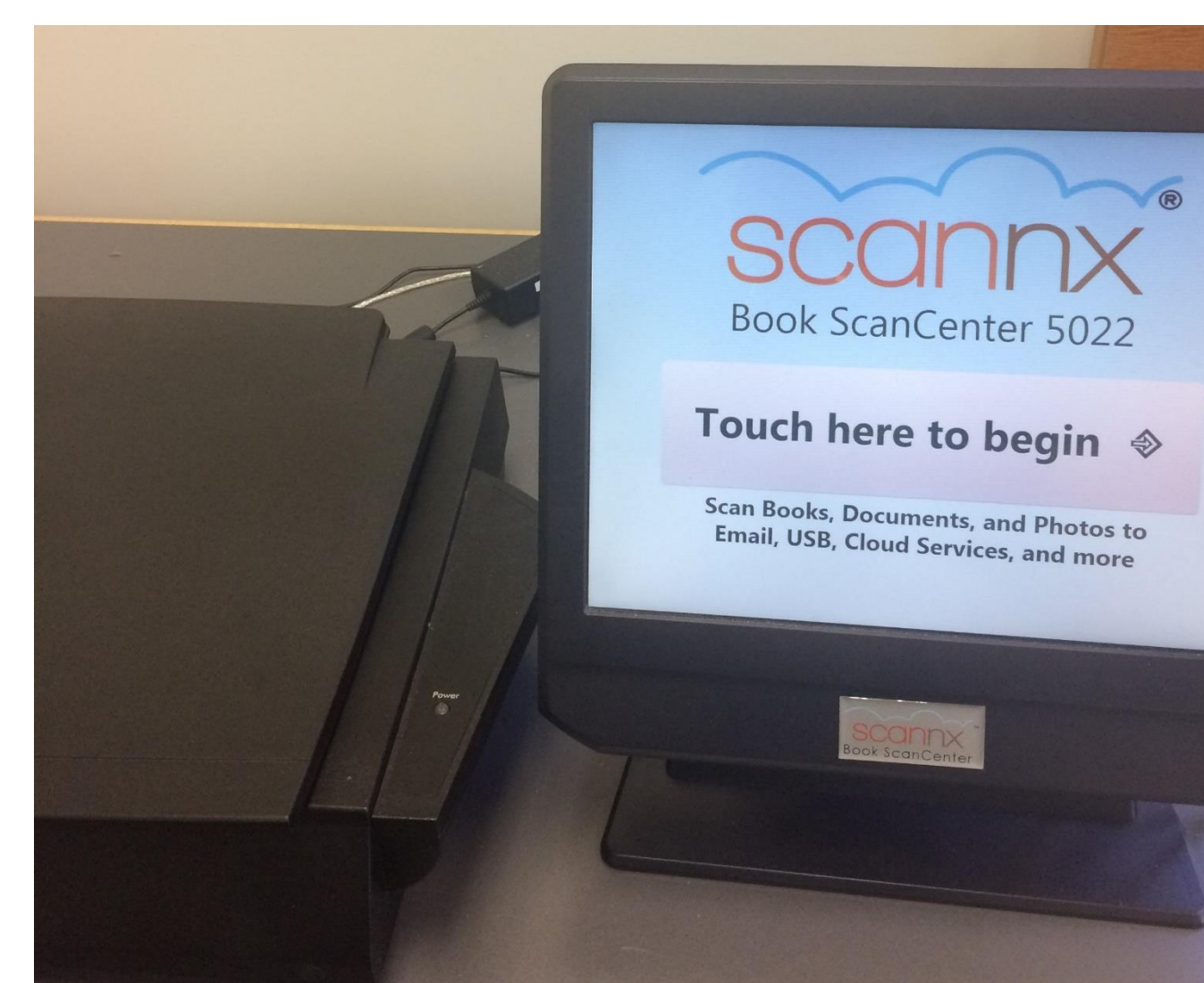
## Next Steps

- Continue to educate about digital records and the need to preserve them through digital curation.
- Survey campus to find digital records, the extent, and the types of formats.
- Develop a wants and needs list for a digital preservation solution.
- Analyze existing systems to select one or create a custom solution.
- Create a digital curation plan.
- Select, ingest, preserve and provide access to digital records.

## Digitization



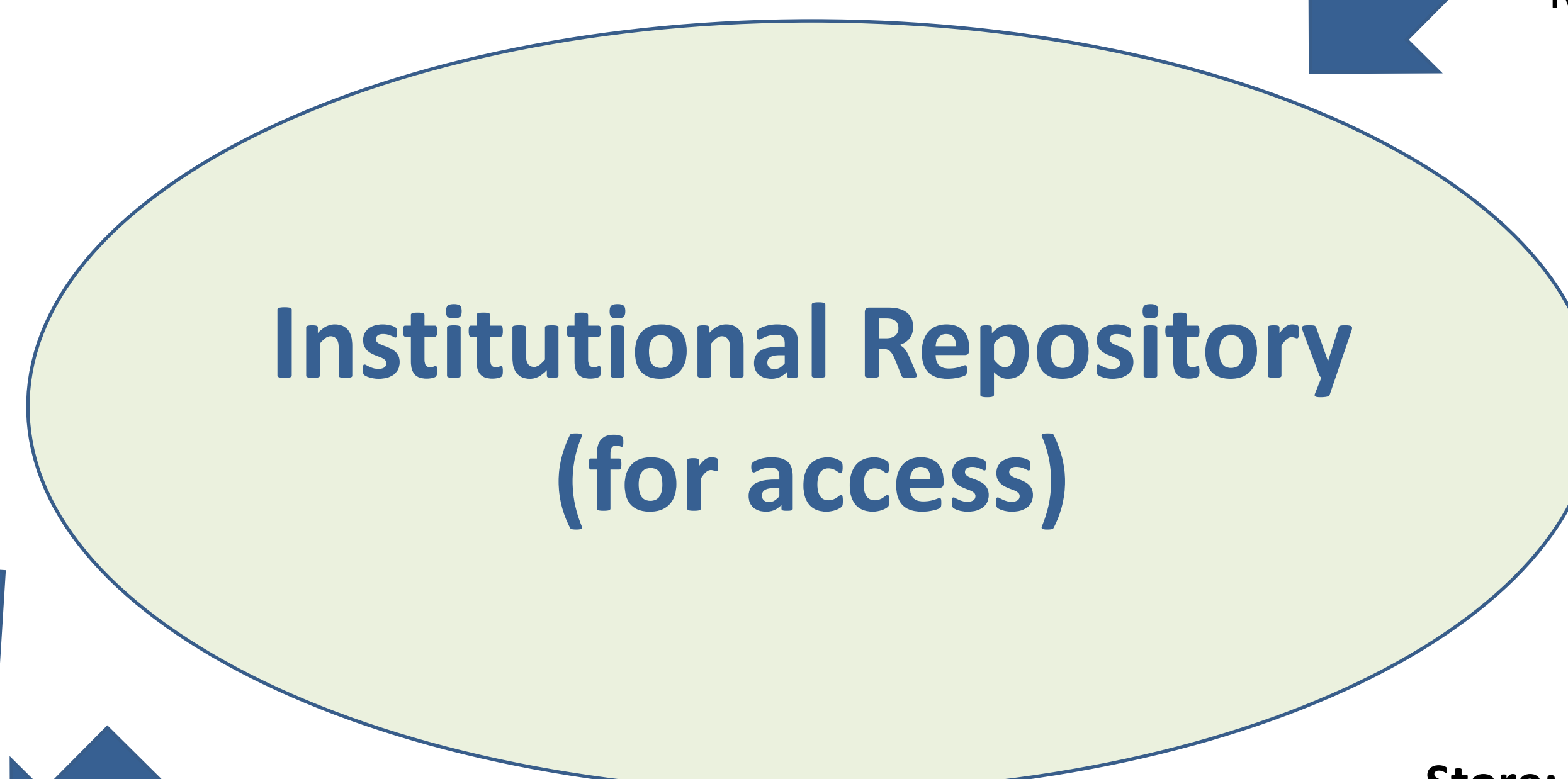
**Select:** Documents, images, audio, audiovisual items, etc. from Special Collections.



**Digitize:** Documents and images are scanned. Audio and audiovisual materials are converted to digital using appropriate software and hardware.

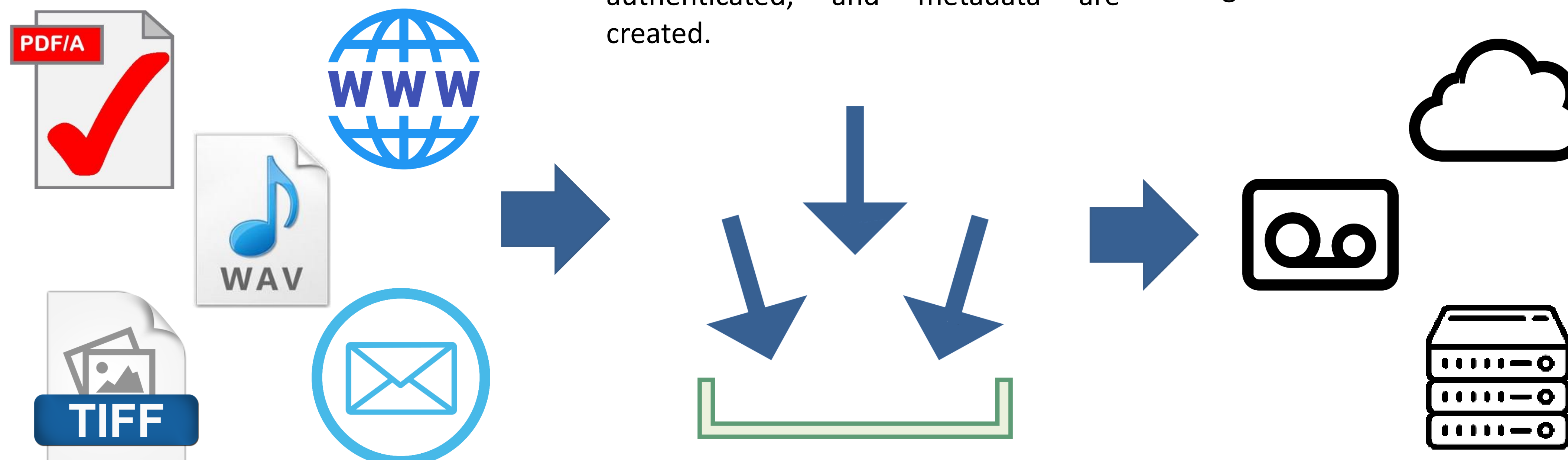


**Save:** Choose the best file format for long-term storage:  
 PDF/A for documents  
 TIFF for images  
 WAV for audio  
 MXF for audiovisual



**Select:** Digital documents, images, audio, websites email, etc. with archival value.

**Ingest:** Digital files are input into a system, checked for obsolete formats, authenticated, and metadata are created.



**Store:** Use redundant storage methods (cloud, tape backups, and local servers) and disperse storage geographically. Files are periodically checked for degradation and obsolete formats.

## Digital Preservation

## Digitization

“The process of transforming analog material into binary electronic (digital) form, especially for storage and use in a computer.”  
 - Society of American Archivists, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*

Digitization may be a form of preservation, in that physical collections are not handled as frequently. Many institutions select records for digitization based on frequency of use. By digitizing these records, users can access the digital surrogate instead of the original.

But digitization is NOT the same as digital preservation. In fact, digitized records should be among those considered for digital preservation.

## Digital Preservation

“Digital preservation combines policies, strategies and actions to ensure access to reformatted and born digital content regardless of the challenges of media failure and technological change.”  
 - ALCTS Preservation and Reformatting Section, Working Group, 2007

- Important aspects of digital preservation are:
- *Content capture:* document processes and specifications, produce metadata to enable access.
  - *File integrity:* ensure the records are accurate representations of the original, are secure, and are reviewed on a schedule.
  - *Maintenance:* store records in disparate sites and in various ways, review and test regularly, migrate records to other file formats as needed.

The overall goal of digital preservation is to make records accessible for future generations by storing, monitoring, and migrating digital files continuously.