

Archived Documentation: Processes for Responding to Removal Requests from the Archive

The existing UF procedures are based on the "Recommended Policy for Managing Removal Requests" as presented in The Oakland Archive Policy: Recommendations for Managing Removal Requests And Preserving Archival Integrity (School of Information Management and Systems, U.C. Berkeley: 2002, <http://www2.sims.berkeley.edu/research/conferences/aps/removal-policy.html>).

Draft Template Email Response

Prior email response to patrons:

Thank you for contacting the UF Digital Collections and the Digital Library of the Caribbean. The UF Digital Collections and the Digital Library of the Caribbean are permanent access and preservation repositories providing access to materials in perpetuity and long-term digital preservation. The link (XX) is being added to the "disallow" section of the robots.txt directive which issues the commands for search engine robots. As external search engines re-crawl and re-index the site, this item will cease to show in the search engine indexing and search results. This takes variable amounts of time based on the operation of the search engine robots. To hasten this process, we are also submitting a request to immediately remove the page from Google using the Google webmaster tools. The "disallow" using robots.txt and the removal request using Google's webmaster tools is a current procedure by the UF Libraries when any requests are received to suppress items from indexing by external search engines.

Documentation on Processes

Processes as documented in a draft of an article (which was later submitted to the *Florida Library Journal*, where this section was not included, and version where it <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00017121/00001/pdf>) on the history and model for the process:

In November 2010, major improvements were made for search engine optimization resulting in all materials in FDNL and CNDL being well crawled and indexed by major search engines. The ease of findability resulted in greatly increased overall usage as well as a number of patron requests to remove or suppress news stories of arrests, foreclosures, and graduations that appear when they conducted online searches for their names. The patrons were concerned because a simple web search with their names returned these stories first or on the first page of results from searches using major search engines. With the Florida housing market being particularly impacted by the financial downturn, UF received requests from Florida citizens requesting that stories of their home foreclosures be hidden from searches lest they impact employment opportunities. UF received a flurry of these requests immediately after the search engine optimization.

In *The longtail of news: To unpublish or not to unpublish*, Kathy English explains the new phenomenon resulting from online news archives and the request to remove content from the

archives, with the removal requests resulting in a status of “unpublishing” news (2009, http://www.apme.com/resource/resmgr/online_journalism_credibility/long_tail_report.pdf). Similarly, newspaper archives in libraries have also faced requests to unpublish content as with the lawsuit, which was dismissed, wherein a Cornell Alumnus sued to remove a story of his arrest from the library archives of *The Cornell Daily Sun* newspaper (Stratford, 2009, <http://cornellsun.com/section/news/content/2009/01/23/judge-dismisses-libel-suit-against-cornell>). Unpublishing as the actual removal of content from an archive is counter to the mission of archives and to both FDNL and CNDL. However, some support needed to be in place so that news stories in newspapers in FDNL and CNDL could not be found through commercial web searches which present the stories in a decontextualized manner as though they exist without the benefit of subsequent stories and context, which could cause negative impacts for various individuals. In searching for guidance, UF located the *Oakland Archive Policy: Recommendations for managing removal requests and preserving archival integrity (of electronic documents)* (<http://www2.sims.berkeley.edu/research/conferences/aps/removal-policy.html>). The *Oakland Archive Policy* seeks to protect archives and archival integrity while also supporting a productive method for responding to removal requests. In using the *Oakland Archive Policy* as a model, UF developed a procedure for handling removal requests. The procedure is that when a request to withdraw a news story is received, UF adds the newspaper issue with that story to be listed as “disallow” in the robots.txt directive, which issues the commands for search engine robots. As external search engines re-crawl and re-index the site, the newspaper issue and all stories in that issue cease to be included or shown in the search engine indexing and search results. This takes variable amounts of time based on the operation of the search engine robots. To hasten the process, UF also uses the Google Webmaster tools to request immediate removal of the link. The “disallow” using robots.txt and the removal request using Google’s webmaster tools is a temporary procedure by the UF Libraries when any requests are received to suppress items from indexing by external search engines. This temporary procedure is applied for all requests. This procedure is temporarily in place while the UF Libraries develop official policies and procedures. Once the new policies and procedures are in place, UF’s DLC will use its list of accommodated removal requests to notify the affected parties of any consequences resulting from the modifications to the policies and procedures.