Digital Project FAQ

Introduction

This document was created as a helpful resource:

- For offering more guidance on the plan and scope of your project
- To use as a reference regarding our digital project process at U-M Library
- For answering the questions in the Digital Project Proposal (DPP)
- For helping you bring answers to the initial meeting with the team who will work with you on the digital project

Below you will find questions that encompass potential questions about the plan and scope of your materials and your project.

1. What do you have that you want to digitize?

It’s important to know what the collection includes – text pages, photos, items in color, handwritten items, old audio/video recordings, ephemera, etc. If we know what we have in advance, we can plan for the best way to handle them. If something unknown is discovered during digitization, we have to stop, go over the new material, discuss how to handle it and how this will affect the project schedule. If a vendor is digitizing the material, surprises increase the costs of the project and run the risk of not meeting deadlines.

Here are things to consider:

- **How large is the collection?** Figure out how many items you have in the collection. The more accurate the count, the better it is for planning purposes. The project team can start with a guestimate and refine from there, but an accurate count will become necessary when the project reaches the point of preparing items to be sent for digitization. In the case of items like photo albums, it is useful to provide a count of the number of albums in addition to the number of photos, so we can discuss that in relation to what should be digitized.

- **What formats are in the collection?** Does the collection have multiple formats—text, maps, photographs, correspondence, audio, video, etc.? Please be as specific as possible.

- **Can bound items be disbound?** If your collection includes books that are readily available at other institutions, perhaps some could be disbound (removing the binding so only the pages remain)? Doing so makes the books easier and cheaper to scan. Disbound books are usually recycled and removed from the library collection (if that is where the volume is housed), unless there are explicit reasons to keep the loose pages afterwards.
• **Is the collection static or growing?** Is the physical collection set in size, or will new material be added over time? If the collection is expected to grow, indicate how often material is added, how much with each update, and whether or not the new material will be added to the digital collection. (If it will be added, be sure to secure the right(s) to digitize and access the new material.)

• **Are there duplicate items?** Are you aware of any duplicated material in the collection? DLPS does not generally digitize duplicates unless there is overwhelming need to present the same content more than once. We recommend going through the collection and noting where duplicates exist. If one copy is better than another, choose the copy you prefer to use. Digitization projects can also be a good time to review what’s in the collection and weed out material that is no longer needed.

• **Are any items already digital/digitized?** If any of the items are already digital or have been digitized from analog, we’d like to review the files. We want to be sure they meet minimal U-M specifications, what the digitized formats are, whether the digital items are proprietary or open-source, or if conversion to another digital format is required.

• **Do other institutions have some or all of these materials digitized?** In addition, investigate whether other institutions have digitized these materials to see if we should spend more time on unique items to digitize.

• **Are you willing to have the materials sent to a vendor for digitization?** Sending materials to a vendor often gets results in a quicker turnaround, but some materials may not be able to leave campus/town/state. We need to know if that’s the case, and for which items. Some materials can only be handled by outside vendors (e.g., microfilm).

### 2. What is the condition of the originals?

Are any of the items too fragile or too difficult to digitize? (Issues like copyright and duplication may apply here; see the DPP and later in this FAQ for this information.)

Review your collection to determine the fragility of the material. Some material may need to be stabilized before it can be digitized; some material may need treatment afterwards to address wear-and-tear that occurred during digitization. If you need assistance to assess the condition of the collection, [Library Preservation and Conservation](#) can help.

### 3. What do you want to do with these items?

Consider how your users will use your collection. What will draw them to use it online? Which of these apply to your collection, and which do you consider to be the most important for your users?

• Page through a volume like a book
• Search for text
• Navigate it like an online photo album
• View it like an online exhibit
• Use it for coursework
- Download content for research purposes
- Listen/watch the content online
- Extends use beyond original intention
- Provides greater access to different user groups (e.g., disabled)

Your material will determine, to a large extent, on which platform the digital collection will be hosted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you have…</th>
<th>It will likely be hosted on…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books and other bound material</td>
<td>HathiTrust Digital Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual photos, maps, papyri, and other image collections</td>
<td>DLXS Image Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encoded, searchable text</td>
<td>DLXS Text Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio converted for preservation storage</td>
<td>Temporarily: MiStorage (dark, i.e., no access)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video converted for preservation storage</td>
<td>Coming soon: Dark Blue for preservation-worthy dark storage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UM faculty and student-authored work (text, image, audio/video)</td>
<td>Deep Blue Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UM faculty and researchers data</td>
<td>Deep Blue Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes, syllabi, course presentations</td>
<td>U-M Library Course Reserves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Keep in mind that if there is an existing collection that you could add to — e.g., an Image Bank for your institution that we already host — this may benefit your patrons more. The benefit of adding to a larger collection of related material is that patrons searching the larger collection may be able to find all your items more easily.

Check the [U-M Library Digital Collections list](#) to see if there is an existing collection.

You may wish to create your own, more explanatory, introductory web page or site. Our collections are developed according to a particular template, and we don’t often customize these. You may link to the collection from your own site in any way you want.
4. What value does the collection offer to the Library?

If we are to host your digitized collection, it is necessary for us to review the materials to see if they are suited to the library’s mission for learning, teaching and research. Indicate to us how the content has value to the library:

- administrative value
- value as an artifact
- value as a curated form
- value to the University and its educational mission
- value through its association to other Library/U-M content
- value as evidence
- monetary value which a digital surrogate would help

5. What metadata do you have for these items?

Indicate to us what kind of metadata you have. We far prefer highly descriptive metadata (e.g., title, author, subject, date, etc.) that offers the patron a method for searching topically or by other important characteristics of the materials.

- What descriptive metadata do you have? Let us know what metadata you currently have. In addition, indicate if you think what you currently have will suffice for the project, or if patrons will need additional metadata? If more metadata is desired, who will find or create it (this is not something DLPS can do for you)? Does the metadata exist somewhere else or does it have to be created from scratch? Consider who will have to cull/create it, and the amount of time/effort needed to do that.

- Do you have preservation-level metadata? Also consider the need for preservation metadata — this is information that documents the condition of the object at the time of digitization, and what methods, equipment, software are used, and what changes are made to provide the files online.

- Does each item have a unique identifier? Every item in the collection must be distinguishable from each other. Normally we use barcodes (for HathiTrust, this is required), but other systems of unique IDs can be used, as long as they are consistent. Discuss with us what kind of identification scheme should be created, if that doesn’t already exist.

- Can you provide an initial set of metadata before digitization? We prefer to have as much metadata gathered/created as possible before digitization. Metadata can be gathered during or after digitization, but it can increase the length and cost of the project, or delay the launch of the project.
6. What funding options are available to help support any aspect of the project?

When it comes to funding digitization, most people default to funding the actual digitization phase of the project. However, every aspect of the project can be supported financially, or have costs offset by outside funding. This would include:

- preparation of the original materials for digitization
- feature development, as needed, in the interface for the collection
- conservation of the physical objects before or after digitization
- long-term upkeep of the digitized files (servers cost money to operate every year).

If departmental funds are not available, the next best option is through grant writing. Most digitization grants will provide money to support certain costs and require the institution to bear the remainder. Some grants will only cover particular aspects, such as metadata and cataloging. Regardless, funding of any aspect is better than none.

Also, consider asking your stakeholders for support. They might be willing to fund any part of the project. If you talk to the stakeholders about your proposal in advance, you may be able to get some funding before the project starts.

Funding may not be available, but being able to offer manpower and expertise to help with different aspects of the project is always welcome. For example, the Digital Conversion Unit (DCU) works directly with the digitization vendors to handle shipping, receiving, performing quality control (QC), and corrections. If you have experience or want to work with the vendor directly, that helps us.

- Staff to prepare items for digitization (packing, shipping, printing inventories).
- Staff to review the digitized items once they come back from the vendor.
- Staff to handle public relations and other announcements to promote your project.

7. Is there a schedule or sequence of events to be mindful of?

Indicate to us if there are any goals or deadlines that have to be met — progress reports, collection-unveiling, when final reports/statistics are needed, etc. Collection owners should be aware that DCU can process about 100 items per month, whether prepped for in-house or sent for scanning to a vendor.

Also, be mindful of your stakeholders. Who has an interest/investment in seeing the collection digitized? What expectations and demands might they have? What say do they have in the project?
8-11. [Copyright/legal questions]

For every hosted collection, we will be working with the [U-M Library Copyright Office](#) to handle rights and permissions of the materials. A copyright officer will work with you to investigate any rights/permissions issues (there may be few to none), and will write a “rights memo” that we can file for the collection. That copyright officer will also be at our initial meeting to discuss any concerns or issues you may have regarding these questions.

See the [Legal Glossary](#) for more information on legal terminology.