
Researchers, Instructors, & Staff Scholarship

7-22-2019

A Vision for Kelvin Smith Library's Digitization Program

Stephanie Becker
Case Western Reserve University

Roger Zander
Case Western Reserve University, rez7@case.edu

Jen Green
Case Western Reserve University, jxg854@case.edu

Author(s) ORCID Identifier:

 Stephanie Becker

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.case.edu/staffworks>

 Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Becker, S. (2019). A Vision for Kelvin Smith Library's Digitization Program.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarly Commons @ Case Western Reserve University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Researchers, Instructors, & Staff Scholarship by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Case Western Reserve University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@case.edu.

CWRU authors have made this work freely available. [Please tell us](#) how this access has benefited or impacted you!

A Vision for Kelvin Smith Library's Digitization Program

Kelvin Smith Library, Case Western Reserve University
Freedman Center for Digital Scholarship, Creation & Curation

Author: Stephanie Becker, Digital Collections Manager

Contributing authors: Roger Zender, Associate Director, Creation & Curation and Jen Green, Team Lead, Freedman Center for Digital Scholarship

Introduction

Digitization at Case Western Reserve University's (CWRU) Kelvin Smith Library (KSL), started as a method for furthering access to collections and supporting digital projects in the late 1990's. Through lessons learned over the past 20 years of digitizing materials, it is apparent that we need to structure our digitization program specifically around human action for sustainability. New technology leads to improved imaging techniques, which ultimately drives best practices in the cultural heritage field. These changes pose challenges not just to KSL, but to all institutions who invest their resources to meet current standards, only to have those standards change a few years later. Time and experience has helped us understand that sustaining the digitization and stewardship of digital collections require as much, if not more, infrastructure, staffing, and other various resources as our physical collections do. Given this challenge, we will consider what human actions support the long-term efforts of digitization and describe the value and impact those actions will have on our ability to foster partnerships beyond the university.

Building A Centralized Digitization Program

With sustainability in mind, our goal is to move digitization from an activity handled differently by each department, to a centralized and integrated library-wide program that meets needs and expectations both internally and externally. Internally, KSL needs a digitization program that supports the stewardship of our physical collections by:

- Meeting quantifiable preservation standards for digital objects
- Supporting the long-term preservation of our physical materials
- Providing long-term access to, and management of, our digital assets

Externally, our national and international academic stakeholders and colleagues expect that we:

- Preserve our digital collections with as much care as our physical ones
- Evolve to meet the growing demand of digital resources for research
- Provide high-level standards of imaging services

Growing an institutional culture that embraces sharing collections, research, and expertise will expand our ability to meet the needs of our research community. In order to accomplish that, we must assess the *capacity, audience, resources, governance, and partnerships* for digitization at

KSL. First step however, is to establish our mission and vision for creating this centralized program:

- *Mission:* To digitize the unique and rare collections of the Kelvin Smith Library, in an ethical and sustainable manner, to support current and future research.
- *Vision:* To systematically approach digitization for both access and long-term sustainability of physical and digital objects.

Capacity

Designing a systematic approach requires us to assess our capacity and audience for digitization. It's important to ask:

- What parts of our collections can be digitized and how do we prioritize them?
- How do we balance program sustainability with researcher's needs?

In response to these questions KSL's Scholarly Resources and Special Collections Team wrote a 5-year plan that prioritizes our physical collections for digitization. This plan informed the IR Manager's work drafting this Vision Paper, which in-turn calls for the creation of a Digitization Governance Committee--KSL's decision-making committee for digitization policies, practices, and priorities.¹ In May 2019, before the completion of this Vision Paper, the Governance Committee convened and drafted the [Digitization Selection Rubric](#). These are tools that we can use to digitize collections in preparation for patron use over time. Determining our program's capacity will also help us to set reasonable expectations for patrons and librarians regarding turnaround time on projects. The goal here is 'do it once, do it right'. That may mean it takes longer up-front to complete a project, but it saves time and money in the long run by decreasing our need to redo work. While there will inevitably be priority user requests and grant projects, the goal is to minimize these through thorough planning, setting, and communicating clear expectations.

Audience

The KSL digitization program, like other institutional resources, is positioned to serve Case Western Reserve University's mission: "Case Western Reserve University improves and enriches people's lives through research that capitalizes on the power of collaboration, and education that dramatically engages our students." Therefore, the KSL digitization program audience is CWRU students and those that support student success: faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and donors. However, the KSL digitization program is also positioned to make a global impact as digitized materials become freely and openly available to the world on [Digital Case](#), KSLs open access institutional repository. Digital Case broadens the reach of digital collections to students and scholars locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

¹ See Governance Section below.

With the audiences identified, Digital Case continues to ensure delivery of relevant, valuable, and sustainable service through continuous evaluation and assessment of audience needs and the programs efficacy in meeting those needs. This assessment may come in the form of user surveys or usability testing, which will be used to continuously improve digitization services and tools.

Resources

Identifying the needed expertise and assigning staff roles dedicated to digitization is critical. It will also require a level of financial and strategic commitment from library administration. Digitization is a labor intensive process that requires full-time staff dedicated to carry out the work. While there is a benefit to having several positions dedicated to digitization², staffing decisions will ultimately depend on available institutional resources. For KSL, we have dedicated a single full-time library assistant position, working with students, to perform the bulk of the digitization. The program is overseen by a full-time Institutional Repository Manager (Project and Technician Manager), a Digitization Assistant (Technician), and eventually student employees (Operators). All positions report to the Team Leader for Digital Learning & Scholarship.

In addition to human resources, financial and programmatic resources are also essential. At KSL, our administrative and financial commitment enabled us to:

- Create a new full-time non-exempt position dedicated to digitization work
- Purchase a PhaseOne reprographic system allowing for the creation of true preservation digital objects (PDO's) using FADGI standards³
- Coordinate with KSL's Metadata & Acquisitions team to responsibly describe our digitized collection objects, with a focus on anti-racism, diversity, and inclusivity
- Use our newly established institutional repository for access and distribution
- Collaborate with CWRU's IT department (UTech) to responsibly store and manage our digital assets in a cloud environment.

Governance

As noted before, the creation and maintenance of digital objects can easily be as robust as managing physical ones. It is important to identify and organize a committee consisting of library staff who are able to collaboratively address decisions around digitization. Committee members may also be involved with grants, external collaborations, and professional development trainings that are relevant to digitization. Pulling in expertise from all areas of the digitization process into one committee will result in a program that integrates directly with our other collection-based workflows⁴. The following areas of expertise should be represented:

- Physical Collections
- Digital Storage

² See Appendix A.

³ Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative - standards for the digitization of cultural heritage materials set by a group of US federal agencies.

⁴ See Appendix B.

- Digital Imaging
- Preservation
- Digital Preservation
- Digital Collections
- Metadata
- Library Leadership

The committee will be responsible for establishing workflows, standards, project tracking, and determining equipment needs for the digitization lab. At KSL, a digitization committee, consisting of the appropriate expertise, has been formed and will be working intensively to rapidly build up the operations of the program. Once established, a form of that committee will continue to monitor the digitization priorities, new and emerging standards and equipment, and to look at how the program can grow to support a digital preservation program on the horizon.

Partnerships

KSL's digitization program is unsustainable without partners. Because digitizing our collections holds inherent value that opens up the door to global open access, rigorous research potential, and marketing opportunities, the program has the potential to draw a wide variety of collaborative partnerships from anywhere on a micro to macro scale. Internally, KSL's digitization program provides structure for cross team collaboration within the CWRU library system. For example, our digital collections can be used by the Research Services team to demonstrate new materials and digital projects to the faculty and students they work with, thus increasing our presence on campus. KSL staff from all departments will be able to use our digital collections for a wide variety of purposes, including marketing materials and use within presentations or papers for professional development activities.

Institutionally, KSL's digitization program will reach a broad spectrum of CWRU scholars engaged in research and scholarship that may include their own personal collections of unique objects relating to their disciplinary expertise. KSL can now work with them to digitize their objects for both digital scholarship and preservation purposes. A centralized program will also support our strategic initiative to share resources and expertise among all campus libraries, making KSL the target destination for compliant imaging services. KSL staff dedicated to digitization could help train staff in other campus libraries on how to use the equipment they already have to create the highest-quality digital objects possible (for reference, textual, otherwise not special materials). A centralized program would also help us communicate with our campus libraries and partners that the digitization lab can be utilized to address unique items that require special imaging.

Locally and globally, KSL's digitization program will foster established partnerships with other libraries, museums, and historical societies in Cleveland⁵. This is our opportunity to become leaders in the digitization of cultural heritage materials for our own city. We can strengthen our partnerships with these institutions by assisting with all stages of creating and managing digital collections. There will also be an opportunity to create new partnerships with non-cultural

⁵ Some of our established partners are Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Cleveland Museum of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland, and the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

heritage institutions in the area. Given the range of non-profit organizations in Cleveland that focus on community outreach, we can engage our city by offering our expertise and other resources to those organizations. This gives us a chance to leave campus and collaboratively work on projects with our greater Cleveland community.

Conclusion

KSL's unique institutional collections can reach a broader swath of users through inclusion in national and international consortiums such as the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) and HathiTrust Digital Library. Best practices also prepare us to work towards another strategic initiative of establishing a digital preservation program. Digital preservation is a complicated and resource intensive endeavor. We have already had conversations with other institutions⁶ regarding digital preservation, and work happening at KSL is on track with many of those libraries. Through these partnerships, libraries at other universities can pool their resources in pursuit of digital preservation. A formal consortium that not only exchanges ideas but has financial buy-in as well means we may not have to tackle these large challenges alone.

The creation of a centralized library-wide digitization program whose foundation is built on human action, enables KSL to sustain these initiatives into the future. This program directly supports our broad goals to provide access, preserve, and market our collections. It will also support our future oriented goals of:

- Establishing a sustainable digital preservation program
- Transforming Digital Case into a trusted repository
- Fully connecting our digitized resources for maximum exposure and use
- Engaging our community to preserve local heritage
- Developing partnerships to support expanded scholarship.

There is tremendous value in the partnerships and projects that can develop out of a digitization program. Dedicating resources towards these goals will have a long-term impact on KSL's ability to be leaders in the digital collections landscape.

⁶ Consultations took place between CWRU, University of Rochester, Vanderbilt University, and Washington University to discuss collaboration around preservation activities. This included digital preservation, but was not the only topic considered for partnership.

Appendix A: Ideal staffing scenario for a digitization program:

The chart below outlines multiple positions for staffing a full-scale digitization program. While student employees may be part of the operation, digitization calls for specialized full-time skilled labor to carry out the work.

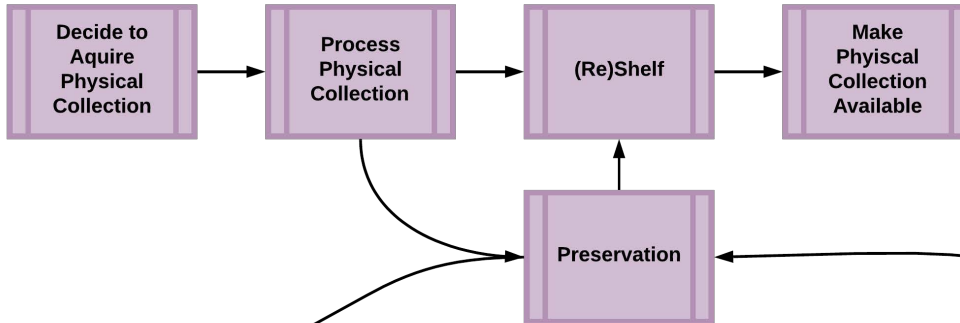
Role Name	General Responsibilities	Required Technical Experience	Required Management Experience	Role in Guidelines	Alternative Terminology
Project Manager	Administrative Planner. Establishes overall plans for digitization program. Interfaces with other departments and stakeholders to prioritize the digitization of candidate collections. Allocates department resources, makes staffing decisions, and applies for grants. Tracks productivity metrics and delegates projects.	Moderate. Should have general familiarity with digitization process and the capabilities and limitations of various hardware and software therein.	High	Creates Guidelines	Program Administrator
Technical Manager	Technical Planner and Overseer. Helps translate overall plans into specific workflows. Writes documents like Standard Operating Procedures. Manages the Quality and Control processes and handles calibration and maintenance tasks. Trains technicians and operators.	High. Should have experience as a power-user and formal technical training in digitization.	Moderate	Creates Guidelines	Lead Technician Technical Lead Technical Planner
Technician	Responsible for the actual digitization. Is comfortable setting up for new projects and seeing them through to completion with minimal input and guidance from the Technical Manager. Understands the underlying principles that are informing the decisions of the Technical Manager and Project Manager.	Moderate. Ideally should have functioned in previous projects as an operator and/or received training in digitization.	Low	Understands Reasoning Behind Guidelines	High-Level User Power User Skilled Operator
Operator	Responsible for the actual digitization. Is comfortable operating a digitization system once a Technical Manager sets it up and provides specific step by step instructions.	Basic. Ideally should be given moderate training and detailed guidelines and operating procedures.	None	Follows Guidelines	Student Worker
Assistant	Provides an additional set of hands. Helps with tasks like transporting collections from storage to the digitization area, loading/unloading film carriers, and organizing items in the digitization queue.	None. Should receive training regarding internal procedures and basic terminology.	None	Follows Guidelines	Runner Production Assistant Intern

7

⁷ Digital Transitions. *Imaging for the Future: Digitization Program Planning*. New York, NY, 2015.

Appendix B: Creation & Curation Content Workflow

Collections Management



Collections Digitization



Digital Collections Management



Digital Collections Elaboration

