



Digitization Project Prioritization & Funding

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Overview

- Brief history
- Issues
- Solution (by committee)
- Positive changes
- Measurable success

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My name is Robin Pike and I'm the Manager of the Digital Conversion and Media Reformatting department at the University of Maryland Libraries at College Park. The department is responsible for the production of all digitized assets across the Libraries's collections, both in-house and through vendors. In this presentation I will address how I've grown the department and transformed digitization activities from ad-hoc projects into a systematic part of our operations, addressing the issues for mass-digitization that we've overcome. I will highlight the positive changes we've made and quantitative and qualitative successes we've measured. Many of these changes were made in order to digitize collections in a predictable and sustainable way, and to prioritize funding across collections held by seven libraries.

History of Digitization

- Structure
 - Special Collections, ad hoc
 - Office of Digital Collections and Research
- Prioritization
 - Dean/Associate Dean Collection manager discretion
- Funding
 - Preservation and Conservation
 - Dean/Associate Dean discretion
 - Book budget
 - Gifts, endowments for specific collections

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Digitization operations at UMD Libraries began in a similar way to that of many other large university library systems. First, requests were digitized for patrons and staff, replacing photographic duplication services, and then a special office under the Dean was created as a first attempt to digitize special collections in a more programmatic way. After the department dissolved, due to a lack of funding, operations were again placed in special collection areas, which served a limited scope of collections. Decisions about programmatic digitization were made at higher levels, often not examining collection usage or examining the collection in relation to other collections or strategic priorities. When the department moved out of special collections, in addition to looking at the administrative structure, I discovered that project prioritization also depended on where money could come from for projects.

Flaws in Processes

- No Libraries-wide uniform prioritization
 - Budget
 - Staff time
- No method to enforce selection decisions
- No budget under DCMR's control
- Problematic funding sources
 - Some collection areas didn't have special funding
 - Different ways to manage accounts

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After analyzing the current process for a year, I highlighted several flaws that were barriers to mass-digitization in the Libraries. The most obvious issue was that there was no Libraries-wide process to determine what would be digitized among seven libraries, what would get how much funding for vendor digitization, and what would determine the allocation of staff time to work on projects in preparation and post-processing. Because of this lack of process, there was no method to enforce selection decisions, and therefore, no process to get buy-in on projects or to prevent staff from working on projects of personal interest.

Another major barrier was that my department didn't have access to a budget to determine what projects we would work on, or to move funding around if some projects came under budget while others went over.

The final major barrier were non-existent or confusing funding sources. Some collection areas had gifts, spendable endowment interest, or foundation accounts associated with them, but not all of projects that were requested to be digitized had these accounts associated with them. Each collection area also managed the accounts, if they had them, in different ways or to different projects, none of which was digitization; it's not that they were opposed to this spending, but they didn't know where to start.

Business Model

- In-house
 - Text and image formats, up to 23.4"x33.1" (A1)
 - Standard slide and negative format sizes
 - A/V
 - Cassette
 - Microcassette
 - 1/4" open reel
 - DAT
 - ADAT
 - CD
 - DVD
 - Few preservation issues
 - Small projects
- Vendor
 - All formats
 - All preservation issues
 - All size projects

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To establish new services for the fledgling department, I surveyed and interviewed stakeholders who had participated in digitization in the past, or might want to in the future about the types of materials in their collections, and the frequency for which patrons requested digital reproductions. I then researched how much it would cost to purchase and set up new digitization stations for the formats we couldn't handle in-house in 2012. I weighed the highest volumes of materials across the seven libraries against the highest volumes of requests for formats to determine and direct development of future digitization, determining the business model for DCMR. We established audio digitization workstations for the specific formats mentioned here as a result of the survey. My other goal was be able to digitize any other formats or special circumstances, so I pursued vendor contracts for these materials. However, these projects would require substantial funding.

Digitization Initiatives Committee (DIC)

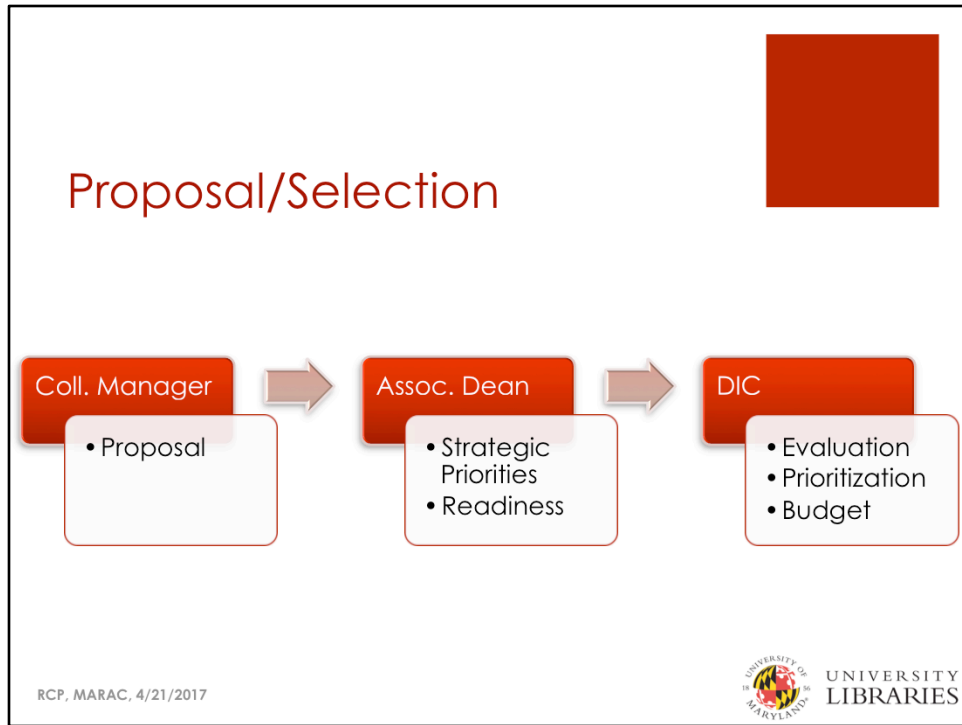


- Mission
 - Seek out and document proposed projects
 - Prioritize projects
 - Match projects with available money
- Members
 - Administration (Director of Development)
 - Collection Management and Special Collections
 - Special Collections
 - Preservation
 - Public Services Division
 - Digital Systems and Stewardship

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After unsuccessfully proposing a new state line for digitization for FY14, for FY15, I proposed to our Dean, Associate Deans, and other library administrators the idea of a joint committee. The charge of the Digitization Initiatives Committee would be to seek out and document proposed projects in an annual cycle, to match the process with the rest of the annual budget cycle, to prioritize projects and funding, and to match prioritized projects with available funds. The committee would be comprised of representation from all Libraries divisions, having a joint say in the prioritization of projects and funding. The committee would also have access to a small state line budget and supplement this with funds from various specific and general gift and endowed accounts. The committee would have the authorization to request the spending of these funds towards the common goal of digitizing for preservation and access.



Under the current process, collection managers, subject librarians, and service-area librarians, such as our Preservation and Conservation department, propose projects to the committee each fall using a web form. Some proposals are also from patrons via collection managers. The web form requires project descriptions, justification, finite scope, notes on the preservation needs of the materials, and requires that some description be available for repurposing to metadata. It also asks questions about copyright status, known funding sources, partnerships, other resources needed to make the project successful, and what stakeholders need to be involved in the project. Associate Deans sign off on the project proposals based on whether the projects are ready for digitization in the upcoming year and whether they meet strategic priorities, and then the proposals are passed to the DIC. The DIC meets to discuss and evaluate the proposals, ranks them within a rubric for prioritization, and then works with the Associate Deans and the Director of Development to develop a budget for digitization each year.

DIC Prioritization Rubric



Area	Weight	Score
Relation to Teaching and Research Priorities	1	High=3; Moderate=2; Low=1; None=0
Relation to Library Administration Priorities	1	High=3; Moderate=2; Low=1; None=0
Preservation Need	1	High=3; Moderate=2; Low=1; None=0
Department/Unit Prioritization	2	High=3; Moderate=2; Low=1; None=0
Continuation from Previous FY	2	Yes=1; No=0
Project Readiness	2	High=3; Moderate=2; Low=1; None=0
Available Funding	2	Full=2; Some=1; None=0
Partnerships	3	Yes=1; No=0
Copyright status	4	Public=2; On-campus=1; Dark=0
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The proposal rubric was developed jointly by the committee for the FY16 process based on feedback gathered by collection managers in open forums. It is openly shared in an effort to be more transparent. This rubric prioritizes teaching, research, and strategic priorities first, as well as preservation needs of collections. Preservation needs was elevated from priority 2 to 1 in this past year because we are finding that much of our audiovisual media are degrading at a rapid rate in comparison to other collections. Though audio tape magnetic media is usually recoverable with extreme intervention, we are finding that most video collections have somewhere between 15% to 50% audio track loss or picture distortion. In a library with premiere broadcasting and performance arts collections, this is a devastating statistic. Internal priorities are ranked in a second tier, along with project readiness and available funding. We also weigh partnerships with campus and external stakeholders, particularly if these partnerships include additional funding. Copyright status is a factor, though it is a low factor; if media collections cannot be made public, we still need to preserve the media via digitization and will either make the file available on-campus only as a surrogate of the deteriorating original, or will digitally preserve it in a dark archive repository.

DIC Annual Timeline

- October: Call for proposals; presentation to LA
- Mid-December: Proposals due
- Mid-December: AD approval
- January/February: DIC reviews, prioritizes, budget proposal
- March: Submits budget proposal to RG
- April: Finalize budget
- May-June: Libraries budgets solidified; presentation to LA; project prep-work; vendor quotes
- July: Begin projects

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The result of this process is that we now have a somewhat predictable budget (or predicable sources for money) and have a project planning cycle that aligns with the Libraries's annual budget cycle and departmental and personal annual work plans. While having an undetermined budget for digitization from year to year is slightly unnerving, this process ensures that the Libraries commit to digitizing and allocating staff time for only the highest-ranked priorities. The process is now completing its fourth planning cycle. All non-new librarians now know what is expected of them in their proposals and they also allocate time during their summers to preparing projects for the fall. Again, the committee values transparency, and makes two presentation to all library staff annually—one at the beginning of the call for proposals and one after projects have been approved to begin. These presentations are similar to keeping shareholders informed, presenting the project proposals, the planned budget, and updating the staff on what we have received for the money we spent.

Staff Changes

- DCMR
 - Digitization Center: production to more QC
 - Digital Projects Librarian: managing and proposing digitization grants
 - Project Manager for other grant
- Metadata Services Department
 - Full-time metadata librarian
 - Metadata GAs
- Collection Areas
 - Embedded metadata librarian positions
 - Hiring students/support staff

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As a side effect of the process, my department and others have made a shift from focusing on small in-house production to more preparation and post-processing tasks, such as sampled quality control, mass-file management, and metadata enhancement on a large scale. As part of this process, staff lines were redistributed or new staff lines were created. The Digital Projects Librarian position is helping me to secure funding for digitization projects (applying for grants) and managing those projects. Other grants may have digitization project managers written into the project budget. This will allow us to either increase production or to supplement the funding as gift funds decrease. Over the past three years, the metadata librarian has also gained two graduate assistant positions who assist in the creation, harvest, and cleanup of metadata, essential for production at this scale. Other collection areas are also hiring metadata librarians to support digitization and other projects, and we are hiring students and other support staff for more digitization initiatives.

Process Success— Money and Things



	Amount Spent	No. of Accounts	Deliverables/FY
FY14 (pre DIC)	~\$35,000	~4	~80,000 pages, ~175 a/v hours
FY15	\$86,834.70	9	~238,000 pages/images, ~290 a/v hours
FY16	\$198,124.42	13	~170,000 pages/images, ~ 1,840 a/v hours
FY17 (est)	\$173,429	15	~192,000 pages/images, ~500 a/v hours

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The success of this process can be measured quantitatively, first by the money we've invested and the sheer output of files. This table illustrates that before the DIC process, it was hard for me to determine what was being spent, and from where, but also that the scale was much smaller. Since the DIC process was established, we have grown considerably, investing in projects as the needs are determined—for example, the varying changes between still image and text digitization v. the waxing and waning of audiovisual assets. The large spike in a/v digitization in FY16 was caused by discovering severe sticky-shed syndrome in much of the School of Music audio reel collection, so we allocated a very large amount to preserving this collection. This year, we are digitizing less a/v media but we are doing so strategically—we are focusing on two small video pilot projects with known preservation concerns, intended as exploration and preparation for future grant applications, similar to a pilot project of 100 dance performance videotapes that we digitized in FY15 and are seeking grant funding to digitize the remainder.

Process Success— Other Measurable Outcomes



- Presentation to stakeholders
 - People know what we're working on, why, question decisions less
- Collection Managers see all projects
- Predictable work plans; project timeline
- Pilots for external funding

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Beyond the “things” we’ve gotten out of spending money, several qualitative measures of success include support from staff across the Libraries. Staff know what the Libraries are choosing to digitize and why, and they know that these decisions are jointly made by departments, the committee, and the Libraries administration. This process fits within a larger project planning process I’ve implemented in my department. Collection managers and other support staff are also able to see all projects, know what tasks they should be working on and when. One of the great results of this process is that with predictable cycles and predictable work, staff are proactive rather than reactive and are generally less stressed and happier when working on these projects. As I mentioned before, this process is also a great way to create small pilot projects for grants or other external funding, such as soliciting money from donors or crowd-funding initiatives, such as was done with our student newspaper digitization project.

Opportunities

- Dwindling funding sources
- Competitive funding
- Staff
- Digital storage/infrastructure/preservation

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Like with any process, there are challenges when adopting new techniques. For the past four years, we knew that basing a large part of the budget on non-renewable gift funding was not sustainable. In planning for FY18 projects, the DIC was incredibly selective and limited the scope of projects, and did not fund two because they did not have allocated funding sources, and from past experience, DCMR could not manage more than the 17 projects approved. We are now looking to grants and foundations for other competitive funding opportunities, making plans to take on additional, smaller pilot projects the next few years until we can again sustain the budget. My overall goal is to work with the Director of Development to raise and endow one to two million dollars, which would sustain the program. I also want to look towards new partnerships or sponsorships of collections.

We have also met our maximum for managing projects and performing tasks at current staffing levels; to take on more projects means we also need to increase staff again, at least on a temporary basis, or for specific projects.

Finally, in the upcoming year, we may meet our largest digital storage and preservation challenge because we are taking on an estimated 50-100TB this fiscal year, the wide variance due to unknown durations of much of the video content we're digitizing this year. I'm working with our developers, systems analysts, and manager of Digital Programs and Initiatives to plan for a future where we may be ingesting a quarter to half petabyte of digitized files per year as we ramp up video mass-digitization. While we don't have answers now, we're looking to institutions like the Library of Congress and Indiana University who are managing this volume, and we're planning for the future.

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