Digitisation Framework

University of Sydney Library

2018
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Introduction

The University of Sydney Library has engaged in digitisation activities since 1996, when it was an innovator in providing online access to collections and promoting digital resources. The Library’s Digitisation Plan 2016-20 was developed to establish and formalise activities and align them with the strategic vision of the University. The Plan was endorsed by the Library’s Senior Management Team (SMT) in 2016 and sets out the aim and guiding principles for the University Library’s digitisation programs in supporting education and research.

The University’s digital collections and digitisation programs align with the University’s strategy of promoting understanding across institutional barriers, as well as embedded values. We commit to working across the University in the work we’re doing, as well as to create a platform to celebrate the works of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and to celebrate diversity and culture from our collections and those of partners.

The Digitisation Framework (this document) outlines priorities, selection processes, risk management, and licensing of collections, and strategic targets for these collections.

The Digitisation technical specifications document addresses collection storage, standards and schema, and quality assurance for the digitisation of Library materials.

Audience and purpose

This Framework provides guidance to those Library staff considering commencing a project to digitise items or cultural collections for the purpose of creating a digital collection. This document also provides a means for the assessment and prioritisation of digitisation work.

It does not address digitisation activities that are conducted as part of the University Library’s work in the areas of:

- Digitisation of the Library’s corporate records
- The purchase of electronic resources
- Single document requests or resource sharing requests from items that are not from Rare Books and Special Collections (including intercampus resource requests or requests for partial digitisation made through Alma or Primo)
- Accessibility digitisation undertaken by the Library under Copyright exceptions
- Unit of Study services

Our commitments

In our digitisation and digital collections work, we commit to:

- Reviewing this document biennially
- Aligning the digital collections that result from digitisation projects with the FAIR principles through making them:
  - Findable, through richly described metadata, indexed in appropriate storage and access systems
  - Accessible, using markup text and providing APIs where possible
  - Interoperable, by using formal metadata standards and vocabularies wherever possible
o Re-usable, by documenting the digitisation process and applying Creative Commons licenses

- Working within the University’s Procurement Policy and the Procurement and Purchasing Guidelines when selecting vendors or suppliers in our digitisation processes.
- Developing digital collections that are created and preserved according to industry standards.
- Providing specialist advice for the University and partners around digitising collections.

Digitisation priorities

1. Unique collections held by the Library
2. Collections that can directly support the University’s strategic plan, particularly in the areas of ‘a culture of research excellence’ and ‘a distinctive Sydney education’
3. Collections that will allow us to collaborate with other organisations to enrich our collections
4. Collections that will enable us to innovate our practices and become a leader in digital collections
5. Single items requested for digitisation of or to support research, with a dedicated system in place for the processing of these requests

Items identified for digitisation will be assessed against our digitisation priorities and through the process outlined below:

Selection and assessment process

Improving access to our collections is our main priority, and our focus is on digitising our unique collections. Additionally, the following criteria are used when evaluating whether to digitise an item or collection. Special consideration is given to culturally significant collections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Assessment criteria</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>The item or collection has not been digitised elsewhere</td>
<td>/25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The item or collection is unique or geographically or historically relevant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Digitisation will assist in making the item or collection more accessible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Digitisation of this content fits within the Library’s collection policy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is sufficient information around this item to provide metadata</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The physical nature of the item</td>
<td>The item or collection is an original or rare item and needs to be protected from manual handling</td>
<td>/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is appropriate hardware and/or software available to economically and accurately digitise the item or collection (either in-house, or through a vendor)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The process of digitisation is not likely to damage the items</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The processing time needed to digitise this item or collection is reasonable</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<th>The need for a digital surrogate</th>
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<tr>
<td>There is a demand for this collection to be more widely available, and this will not mean duplication of existing digital collections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a potential audience for this item or collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digitisation will widen the publicly available information on this subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digitisation of this collection will open up research opportunities for improving legibility, transcription, data mining, data visualisation, or other similar opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digitising this item or collection will allow for digital re-unification or repatriation of geographically distributed collections</td>
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<tr>
<th>Institutional benefits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This digitisation project will create an opportunity for an external partnership for the Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The digitisation of this item or collection will raise institutional prestige for the University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This digitised item or collection can be used in the teaching or research work of the University</td>
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<tr>
<th>Access to digital surrogates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Copyright status of the original item or collection has expired, or we have permission to share it openly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are no restrictions around access to the physical item that would need to be translated to a digital surrogate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The items do not contain any information that would need to be redacted on a digital surrogate</td>
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**Items owned by the University of Sydney Library**

All proposed digitisation projects will be assessed against firm criteria, including:

- **Demand.** An appreciation of user requirements will drive selection and delivery of digitised material. The Library will seek user feedback, including that of current and potential users, by means of tools such as online surveys, structured evaluation and web metrics.
- **Institutional knowledge.** The expertise and collection knowledge possessed by Library staff will be an important consideration when assessing potential digital content.

- **Assessment.** A clear set of criteria for content selection will be established prior to the commencement of any digitisation project or program.

- **Policy.** Selection for digitisation should be in accordance with the Library’s Collection Development Policy.

- **Condition of the physical item.** The original material may be at risk and either deteriorating quickly, or in a poor but stable condition. It may be more expensive to digitise later.

- **Conservation requirements.** Full consideration will be given to any preservation and conservation issues when selecting materials to be digitised.

- **Representation.** The digitised form should be a sufficiently accurate representation of the material to be accessed as an alternative to the original.

- **Evidence.** The digitised form should have integrity as a substitute for the original in scholarly research and citation.

- **Cost.** A range of costs will be considered, such as the cost of selection, digitisation, metadata and the opportunity cost of not digitising other material. Digitisation may also be used as a source of income or as a way of heightening the collection profile.

- **Avoiding duplication of effort.** The item should not exist in digital format in another collection.

- **Scholarly innovation.** The digitised form should enable innovative new research opportunities, such as text and data mining.

**Conditions that negatively impact likelihood of digitisation or inclusion of an item or collection**

- Items where the University of Sydney Library is unable to gain copyright permission or where there is a clear risk of copyright breach

- Where a lack of information or documentation around the item or collection could compromise the authenticity or usefulness of the content to researchers, or may cause cultural harm

- Where our DAM or IR lack the capacity to read or display the media

- Where the process of digitisation with current technology would actively cause damage to a fragile or delicate item

- Where a born digital item or collection is in a format that cannot be format shifted to a long-term preservation format and/or must rely on specific hardware or software to be accessed

**Loaned or donated items**

In addition to the above, items that have been offered as a loan for the purposes of digitisation, or that were donated to the Library will have the following steps taken

1. Prior to digitisation of loaned or donated items, we will work with stakeholders to formalise an agreement around preservation and access to the digitised collection

2. Further, we will ensure that the conditions of this loan or donation are recorded within the metadata of the digital collection

3. If there are any conditions of access to the collection, this will be considered as part of the evaluation and decision-making process prior to digitisation

4. As part of the licensing discussion with a donor or lender, a formalised agreement around ownership and reuse of the digital surrogates will be created and securely stored
Risk management

Processes and planning

- Where library staff are processing items for transit or completing digitisation work, a Safe Work Procedure (SWP) is used that has been developed in partnership with Library Quality and Compliance team. Prior to commencement of project, this document is reviewed with the staff involved, and where needed a variation of the standard document is uploaded to the Library’s QA Document register.
  o SWPs will be reviewed as part of the regular project meetings and post-project to ensure best practice
- A project-specific set of scanning instructions will be provided to all individuals undertaking scanning work. These will include the project’s SWP, document handling instructions, technical standards, naming conventions, and any post processing requirements.
- Project documentation, including reports, decisions, and project plans, will be created and maintained throughout the project. Documentation will be formally recorded and preserved for future decision making and quality improvement purposes.
- Project documentation will be created using standardised templates that are available in our Quality system.

Content

- Where works include traditional knowledge, in collaboration with Local Contexts and traditional knowledge custodians we will only create new collections or add to active collections when all effort has been made to gain the consent of the communities involved
- When collections may include names and images of deceased persons of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, we will include warnings at the collection level
- We will not create collections that contain offensive content that legally cannot be distributed. Where there is uncertainty, we will seek advice from the Office of General Counsel
- We will not publish content that contains information that breaches an individual’s right to privacy, or that contains defamatory material
- We respect an author’s right to commercialise their work, and do not publish collections that are in breach of the Australian Copyright laws.

Physical items

If items are being borrowed from a partner organisation for a digitisation project, the Library must consider:

- How these items will be stored on-site and who will be responsible for them
- A primary and secondary contact person from the lending organisation
- Whether the lender organisation has the appropriate insurance to cover loss or damage to items
- Whether the lender has specific requirements around equipment, lighting levels, or security for loaned items

When using our own collection items in digitisation projects the Library must consider:

- Appropriate levels of security, access, and processes relevant to the item being digitised
- An inventory control or item tracking mechanism for the material
- The risk for digitising items from the Rare Books and Special Collections off-site, and consider for off-site digitisation
  o whether our insurance policy covers loss or damage to the items
- the additional cost of transit fees
- the environmental conditions for both storage and transit

**Standards and technical specifications, files and storage**

We will use internationally recognised standards or guidelines, and schema for our digitisation work in order to ensure interoperability and uniformity in quality across the Library’s digital assets, and to increase the ability of the Library to collaborate with other institutions. The Library’s digitisation technical specifications describes and links to the guidelines and/or standards used for the Library’s digitisation activities.

For external digitisation activities, the Library’s technical specifications will be provided to vendors, in order to ensure that the outputs of digitisation work meet the Library’s requirements.

**Licensing of digitised collections**

As part of our pre-digitisation process, we will determine copyright and licensing for the digital surrogates. While participants in this licensing decision making process may vary, at a minimum the membership of this group will include:

- The Digital Collections Manager
- A representative from the University Library’s Copyright team
- A representative from Rare Books and Special Collections

In alignment with the University’s [Open Access to University Research Policy 2015](#), where the digitisation of a collection results in the creation of a research data set, we will ensure that these are made openly available by depositing them in our Institutional Repository with an associated DOI for the data set.

Where work contains cultural knowledge, we will ensure that appropriate permissions have been sought prior to the digitisation and licensing/sharing of this content.
Appendix A: Strategic targets for digitised collections, 2018-2020

1. A pilot of a Digital Asset Management system (DAM) has been implemented and evaluated as a mechanism for preservation, display and discovery of digital collections, alongside our Library strategic goal to engage with faculties and portfolios to digitise unique research materials. To achieve this, we will:
   a. Partner with at least one centre, student organisation, or faculty at the University of Sydney to digitise a unique cultural collection and include this in the DAM
   b. Partner with the University Museums to include at least one 3D scanned object from their collections into the DAM
2. We will attract support for further digitisation programs by seeking external funding and engaging in strategic partnerships
3. An agreed upon selection and prioritisation process is used for identifying medium to large scale digitisation projects in order to strategically support and enhance the research and education goals of the University
4. Regular reporting around collection use and digitisation progress to stakeholders (internal and external), with an annual summary of activity reported in the first month of every year.
5. A standardised process for external digitisation requests to Rare Books and Special Collections is in place
6. A formalised post-digitisation project review process is in place and is used for all digitisation projects
7. We will foster relationships and collaborative opportunities with other academic and cultural memory institutions through contributing to shared digital collections and we will have commenced at least one collaboration using a digitised object from our Rare Books and Special Collections that utilises the International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF)
8. Where appropriate, crowdsourcing is used to transcribe handwritten content or to improve metadata on our digitised collections to increase collection visibility, use and impact, as well as enrich content for new audiences and facilitate the interpretation of material
9. At least one external collaboration around innovative technical development in this space has commenced as part of our goal to position the University Library as a leader in the development and implementation of innovative technologies in digitisation and the management of digital collections
10. We partner with units of study and researchers to support and enhance the research and education goals of the University through the creation of and access to digital representations of collection items.
Appendix B: Glossary of Terms

Active and archival collections
Digital collections are defined as being either active or archival at the University of Sydney Library.

- **Active collections** are defined as collections that are being added to as content is digitised or created.
- **Archival collections** are whole digitised collections where all available content has been added to the DAM, or where there have not been additions to the Institutional Repository for a set number of years.

Born digital items
Born digital items are defined as those that have been created in digital format, including software, digital images, electronic documents (e.g. emails, Word documents, PDFs), as well as harvested web content.

This framework was developed by the Digital Curation and Data Team in 2018.

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