Selecting Collections for Digitization and Project Planning

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Outline

- Context
- Selection Issues and Criteria
- Sources of Funding
- Planning Resources
- Writing the Proposal
Context

- Digitization projects for long term retention and network delivery
- Some of the same issues apply if you are digitizing but not delivering online
- Good digital materials and collections
  - Reusable
  - Persistent
  - Interoperable
Importance of Selection

☐ All digitization projects are costly.
☐ We all have limited time and financial resources.
☐ All projects require a time commitment from permanent staff – even if we have external funding.
☐ Selecting one project means that others must be rejected.
Selection Factors

- Copyright Status
- Significance of the Collection
- Current and Potential Users
- Organization and Descriptive Metadata
- Relationship to Other Digital Collections
- Formats and Languages
- Funding
Copyright Status

☐ What is the copyright status of the source materials?
- Public domain
- Controlled by your institution
- Permission secured
- Situation unknown or murky
Public Domain

(https://www.unc.edu/~unclng/public-d.htm)

- Many works are no longer covered by copyright or never were covered by copyright.
- Works in the public domain may be used without permission.
- What’s in the public domain?
  - All works published before January 1, 1923.
  - Works published between 1923 and 1964 and not renewed in the 28th year.
  - Unpublished works whose author died before 1932; otherwise, the term is life plus 70 years.
- Many people attempt to claim copyright simply because they own the work or have published it.
Significance of the Collection

- Always start with significance, which may be measured in different ways. “The significance of the collection is a primary criterion for evaluation” (LC/Ameritech Competition). Why this collection?
- Will experts attest to the importance of the collection?
- How does it fit into current or potential research activities?
- Does the intellectual quality of the source materials warrant the level of access made possible by digitizing?
- Will digitization enhance the intellectual value of the material?
- Are you primarily trying to preserve the collection or improve access?
- Some evidence that digitizing anything increases use, but current use is still an important indicator.
Current and potential users

- Are users consulting the proposed source materials?
- Is current access so difficult that digitization will create a new audience?
- Will electronic access to these materials enhance their value to users?
- Does the physical condition of the originals limit their use?
- Are related materials widely dispersed?
- Are there librarians or archivists who might collaborate on the project?
- Will digitization meet the needs of local users?
Organization and Metadata

☐ Has the collection been organized and processed?

☐ Is there a finding aid – either paper or online?
  ■ How complete is the finding aid?
  ■ Does it include all of the information needed for discovery?
  ■ How easy will it be to adapt this finding aid to provide online access to the collection?

☐ If the answer is no to either question, project planning and project costs will increase.
Relationship to Other Digital Collections

- If published material, has it already been digitized? All? Parts of the collection?
- Would cooperative digitization effort improve this project? Could you find partners?
- How does this collection fit in with other digital collections? Will the whole be greater than the sum of the parts?
- Are there complementary collections in other institutions? Would one of these institutions be interested in partnering?
Formats and Language

- Some formats are more established and mainstream for digitization than others.
  - Text, photographs, visual materials
  - Audio
  - Video

- Creation of searchable text requires additional time and skills; non-Western languages present challenges.

- Do you or potential partners have the expertise to deal with these formats? Sustain access to them over time? Preserve them?
Sources of Funding

- Grants
  - Federal
  - State
  - Foundation

- University
  - Primarily small projects or pilot projects
  - NEH Endowment

- Partnerships
Grants

- Specific digitization grant programs, such as IMLS (www.imls.gov)
- Programs in other agencies that will consider digitization projects, such as the National Endowment for the Humanities (www.neh.gov)
- Some money to the state from the federal government through LSTA
- Mellon Foundation is particularly interested in digitization projects
Grant Challenges

- Proposal require large time commitment to prepare
  - Don’t do it for a project that isn’t really important to you – just because money is available
  - Take the time to look at the specific grant criteria and evaluate objectively your chances of success
- Federal grants require 33%-50% match, depending upon the program and the amount of the request
- Many proposals submitted twice
Partnerships

- Some projects are too large or too complex to do without partners.
- Sometimes one unit simply does not have the expertise or the resources to complete the project alone.
- In all cases, work from written proposals and agreements.
Partnerships – no external funding

- Wright American Fiction funded through the CIC
  - Very time-consuming to develop and manage
  - Risky for long-term projects that require a commitment over multiple years
  - Requires a dedicated and flexible project manager
Partnerships – external funding

- Some grants require partners, many prefer partners.
- Don’t go looking for partners just to qualify for the grant.
- Logistics easier with internal partners than external partners, but grants usually consider external partners only.
- Partners may be needed to meet cost share requirement.
Planning – Moving from What to How

- Start with a skeletal plan before identifying funding sources, then customize.
- Iterative, non-linear process
- Be prepared to radically change a project.
- Be prepared to abandon a project.
- Keep the number of partners to a minimum – delineate responsibilities for planning.
- Cannot prepare a budget without knowing exactly what you are going to do.

Plan → Budget → Revise plan → Revise Budget
Resources for Planning/Proposals

- Examples of successful proposals on Digital Library Program web site
  Also accessible via project sites: Charles W. Cushman Collection proposal
- Examples on IMLS web site
  http://www.imls.gov/grants/index.htm
- National Leadership Grant (NLG) Tutorial
  http://e-services.imls.gov/project_planning/
- LC/Ameritech Competition, National Digital Library (1996-1999) – Most complete description of specifics
Proposal Outline

- Two major sections
  - The collection description and its significance
  - The management plan
    - What are you going to do? Who’s going to do it? What are their qualifications? Related experience?
    - Technical details go in this section or appendices
  - Digitization grants will have more specific selection criteria that determine sections of the grant
- Always limits on length, usually 10 pages
Collection and Use Information

☐ Significance of the collection

☐ Audience and users – We always include user studies and introduce usability testing here

☐ Relationship to other digital collections
Management Plan

- Preparation and preservation of the collection
- Digital conversion methodology
  - In-house conversion vs. outsourcing
- Intellectual access (cataloging and metadata)
- Network delivery and access
  - Technical infrastructure
  - Web access – We always include usability testing in this section
Sustainability

- What will happen when the grant ends? How will you sustain this resource? Two parts:
  - Technical
  - Administrative
- Important to address both.
  - Existing technical infrastructure and institutional commitment to permanence
  - Existing administrative infrastructure that will provide an organizational home for upgrades and migration
Specific Criteria

- These will vary depending upon the funding agency
- National Leadership Grants
  - National impact
  - Adaptability
  - Dissemination – resource and project findings
  - Evaluation – preferably outcome-based – but also evaluation of web interface and functionality
Additional Elements

- Budget
- Budget narrative
- “Specifications for Projects Involving Digitization” (next slide)
- Plan of Work – Schedule of Completion
- Two-page resumes for key personnel
- Letters of support
Specifications for Digitization

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- Types of materials to be digitized
- Copyright issues
- Equipment, with specifications, that will be used
- Types of file formats for master, access, and thumbnail images; formats for other media including sampling rates, if applicable
Specifications for Digitization

- Delivery medium and digital access management system
- Quality control plan
- Estimate cost per image (scanning, quality control, indexing)
- Metadata standards to be used
- Preservation and maintenance of digital files after grant
Specifications for Digitization

- Plans for the creation of cataloging records
- Plans for submitting records to national registries
- URLs for any previously-digitized collections
Contact Information

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If you want to consult with DLP staff about a digitization project – or any other digital library project – do not hesitate to contact me.