

**Digitization Program Plan
For the Southeastern Region of New York**

April 2002

**Southeastern New York Library Resources Council
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- ***“OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, AND PRIORITIES: DEVELOPING A COLLABORATIVE DIGITIZATION PLAN FOR THE MID-HUDSON VALLEY.”*** REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE SOUTHEASTERN NEW YORK REGIONAL DIGITAL TASK FORCE BY ERIC J. ROTH, MAY 2001.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Digitization Program Plan for the Southeastern Region of New York* represents the collaborative efforts of the cultural heritage institutions of the southeastern NY region:

- public, academic, school and special library community,
- government and other archival repositories, and
- historical museums.

The intent is to create a roadmap that will result in digital access to historic and unique collections owned by these cultural heritage institutions. A Regional Digitization Advisory Task Force was created, pulling together library, museum and archive professionals to work cooperatively to develop a coordinated regional strategy, the results of which are stated in the Plan.

The Task Force identified the following major areas of focus from which goals were developed that, when achieved, will result in the Task Force's vision of improved access to unique and special collections that are owned by the cultural heritage institutions of the Southeastern region.

- **Organizational Infrastructure**

Create a cross-organizational steering committee comprised of representatives from seven to nine key institutions in the region to guide the implementation initiatives for this regional digital effort.

- **Collection Selection Criteria**

Establish selection criteria and identify target collections to be digitized by cultural heritage institutions within the southeastern New York region

- **Standards**

Agree upon and adopt standards for metadata and scanning that will facilitate collaborative digitization

- **Legal Issues**

Identify the legal issues relating to digitizing collections and develop an awareness strategy to educate the staff of the regional cultural heritage institutions that are contemplating digitizing a collection

- **Accessible Collections**

Create a regional collection of digital objects, contributed by cultural heritage institutions within the southeastern New York region, which is open, distributed, and easily accessible by the public.

- **Training**

Provide training and consulting opportunities, focusing on the digitizing of materials and managing digital projects, for staff of the cultural heritage institutions

To complement the Plan, a separate report was generated, “*Opportunities, Challenges, and Priorities: Developing a Collaborative Digitization Plan for the Mid-Hudson Valley,*” which outlines the present status of digitization in the region.

This planning initiative, administered through the Southeastern New York Library Resources Council, was funded through Federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) moneys, awarded to the New York State Library by the Federal Institute of Museum and Library Services.

SECTION I

NEEDS STATEMENT & VISION

In New York State, digital libraries are recognized as a key component in the development of the regional and statewide information infrastructure known as the New York Online Virtual Electronic Library (NOVEL), which will support access to information by all New Yorkers, including the research and educational community. Doorways to Information in the 21st Century, New York's statewide automation plan, recommends that "in order to expand the scope of online information available to residents of New York, libraries should be encouraged to provide access to some of their resources in digital format via the Internet"

Such statements are easily supported by the increased demand for access to collections being driven by the Internet phenomenon. Historians and other scholars use the Internet to explore more far-reaching disciplines. Genealogists and other research hobbyists conduct personal research from their own homes. Students and teachers need access to authoritative and accurate information from reliable sources.

In 2001, the Southeastern New York Library Resources Council (SENYLRC) received a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant from the New York State Library to develop a region-wide plan for the digitization of library, archival, museum, and other important materials in the pursuit of making them more accessible to researchers. The development of a regional plan, under the guidance of a Regional Digitization Advisory Task Force (RDATF), is a critical and necessary first step to create the collaborative environment among multiple institutions that will result in a regional digital identity and, to this end, facilitate the acquisition of funding from a variety of sources.

Furthermore, a cooperative plan is needed to provide the regional cultural heritage institutions, the

- public, academic, school and special library community,
- government and other archival repositories, and
- historical museums,

with the direction, standards, infrastructure, training and technical legal knowledge necessary to develop a successful, long-term digital library program.

The Regional Digital Advisory Task Force drafted a vision statement and developed the goals, objectives, and activities incorporated in this plan. In this process, the RDATF also identified key stakeholders and mandates, and discussed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that will likely arise during the planning and implementation processes. More importantly, the group reached consensus to move forward with a regional digitization planning process and to work together to achieve its implementation and success.

VISION STATEMENT

The vision statement provides the future outlook for digitization in the southeastern New York region. The development of this statement presupposes an understanding of (1) the players or stakeholders, (2) mandates or requirements of the participating organizations, and (3) the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that may have an impact on the development and implementation of a digitization program. The vision statement for this initiative emphasizes the role that the participating institutions will play in providing the public with online, digitized access to collections held with the region.

Vision

The cultural heritage institutions (libraries, archives, museums, historical societies and repositories, etc.) of the southeastern New York region will collaborate to provide to the public continually improved access to their unique and special collections in digital format.

To achieve this vision, these institutions will share:

- *a common understanding of the richness, variety and public value of the collections in their care;*
- *the benefits and choices involved in creating, maintaining, disseminating and providing access to these collections through digital means;*
- *the standards and legal requirements by which they should assess, manage and provide access to digital content;*
- *and the benefits of staff training and continuing education relevant to digitization issues.*

SECTION II

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES

This section outlines six goals identified by the Regional Digital Advisory Task Force for a digitization program in the southeastern region of New York including:

Goal 1 Organizational Infrastructure

Create a cross-organizational steering committee comprised of representatives from seven to nine key institutions in the region to guide the implementation initiatives for this regional digital effort

Goal 2 Collection Selection Criteria

Establish selection criteria to identify target collections to be digitized by cultural heritage institutions within the southeastern New York region

Goal 3 Standards

Agree upon and adopt standards for metadata and scanning that will facilitate collaborative digitization

Goal 4 Legal Issues

Identify the legal issues relating to digitizing collections and develop an awareness strategy to educate the staff of the regional cultural heritage institutions that are contemplating digitizing a collection

Goal 5 Accessible Collections

Create a regional collection of digital objects, contributed by cultural heritage institutions within the southeastern New York region, which is open, distributed and easily accessible by the public

Goal 6 Training

Provide training and consulting opportunities, focusing on the digitizing of materials and managing digital projects, for staff of the cultural heritage institutions

Attached to each goal are objectives and activities to achieve that goal. [A timeline (Section IX) and evaluative criteria (Section VIII) relating to these goals can be found in subsequent sections of the planning document.]

Goal 1 Organizational Infrastructure

Create a cross-organizational steering committee comprised of representatives from seven to nine key institutions in the region to guide the implementation initiatives for this regional digital effort

Objective 1.1 Agree on the function, number of members, representative institutions and governance structure of the steering committee (2nd & 3rd quarter, 2002)

Activities:

- The Board of Trustees of the Southeastern New York Library Resources Council, with suggestions from the RDATAF, will invite staff from institutions that should be included on a newly-created SENYLRC committee -- Digital Advisory Steering Committee (DASC) – and include representatives from the library systems, academic and other libraries, archival repositories and local government and the lay community
- SENYLRC will assign a staff member to assume coordinating responsibilities of the Digital Advisory Steering Committee and its activities

Objective 1.2 Guide the implementation strategies of the regional digitizing program plan, including the identification of grant funding to implement the goals of this Plan.(begin 2nd quarter, 2002)

Activities:

- The DASC to explore grant options and appropriate implementation projects to take advantage of available grant funding
- Advertise such grant opportunities to the cultural heritage community
- The DASC will monitor implementation activities and determine future directions

Objective 1.3 Investigate and determine the best structure for both program administration and fiscal administration of potential collaborative grants for regional digitization. (This proposed structure might be included in future grant applications as a fundable component.) (2002-2003)

Goal 2 Collection Selection Criteria

Establish selection criteria and identify target collections to be digitized by cultural heritage institutions within the southeastern New York region

Objective 2.1 Through a task force representing various cultural heritage communities, explore approaches of other collaborative efforts to content and collection development (no later than 2002-2003)

Activities:

- Appoint collection development task force
- Examine past surveys that have been conducted by the Lower Hudson Conference and the Documentary Heritage Program in relation to collection content within the region
- Conduct a comprehensive survey of contributing repositories designed to encourage individual institutions to identify collections suitable for digitization and identify possible or likely formats for digitization purposes
- Create a web-based survey to solicit information on the targeted collections

Objective 2.2 Establish guidelines concerning the scope, content, and format of materials for a regional collaborative project (no later than 2004)

Activities:

- Determine major subject and thematic areas that will become priorities for digitization
- Provide guidelines to assist institutions in identifying and preparing items in their collections for digitization

Goal 3 Standards

Agree upon and adopt standards for metadata and scanning that will facilitate collaborative digitization

Objective 3.1 Through a task force representing various cultural heritage communities, *explore metadata* issues considered by other collaborative initiatives (no later than 2002-2003)

Activities:

- Determine the basic components of a metadata record
- Explore and compare metadata standards used by other digital projects

Objective 3.2 Develop a recommendation on *creation of metadata* for a collaborative initiative (no later than 2003)

Activities:

- Develop written and online guide to standards, references and web-based technical information

Objective 3.3 Through a task force representing various cultural heritage communities, *explore national scan standards* appropriate to collaborative initiatives (no later than 2002-2003)

Activities:

- Identify and compare metadata standards used by other digital projects

Objective 3.4 Develop a *recommendation for scan standards* for collaborative participants (no later than 2003)

Activities:

- Develop written and online guide to standards, references and web-based technical information

Goal 4 Legal Issues

Identify the legal issues relating to digitizing collections and develop an awareness strategy to educate the staff of the regional cultural heritage institutions that are contemplating digitizing a collection

Objective 4.1 Materials to support museum, archival, and library professional decision making related to legal issues in the creation of digital content should be accessible in both print and online format (no later than 2003-2004)

Activities:

- Create a task force to identify such legal issues
- Develop the appropriate formats to publish and distribute information pertaining to these legal issues
- Utilize appropriate experts in this legal area as needed

Objective 4.2 Address a range of copyright and intellectual property rights from the perspective of the cultural heritage community (no later than 2003-2004)

Activities:

- Provide links and references to other websites relating to copyright and cultural property legal issues
- Provide a list of guidelines that can be used when making decisions involving legal issues and collections
- Provide a disclaimer stating that copyright and legal issues are responsibility of the originating source. (*Examples exist on the sites of other projects*)
- Create a publicly accessible bibliography and file of articles relating to legal issues

Objectives 4.3 Train professionals in the legal issues related to digitization (no later 2003)

Activities:

- Offer a training session on legal issues as part of the training program listed under goal 6

Goal 5 Accessible Collections

Create a regional collection of digital objects, contributed by cultural heritage institutions within the southeastern New York region, which is open, distributed and easily accessible by the public

Objective 5.1 Develop recommendations for southeastern New York regional access to digitized special collections (no later than 2004)

Activities:

- Identify options for increasing access, including development of a website portal, the development of a database of collections, and a metadata database
- Present a comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of portals and online databases designed to provide access to digital collections
- Recommend the forms by which the southeastern region will provide access to collections held within the region

Objective 5.2 Engage regional repositories in digitization activities that support agreed-to standards for scanning and metadata which will support regional or broader finding systems for digital collections (no later than 2004-2006)

Activities:

- Develop a strategy for increasing awareness of the digitized special collections
- Develop appropriate approach for collecting data – website portal or database
- Create descriptive list of digital collections
- Create a regional website that will provide links to individual institution collections
- Create a database, including browse capability
- Identify software for ‘cataloging’, indexing, searching digital collections
- Provide templates for describing collections

Objective 5.3 Through a task force including representatives from various cultural heritage organizations, identify strategies to preserve digital objects (no later than 2005)

Activities:

- Survey methods used by existing programs to preserve the digital object
- Explore options for collaboration solutions to digital preservation
- Identify organizations that could function as archival repositories for digital content
- Identify appropriate preservation media
- Develop document for digital image and metadata sustainability

Goal 6 Training

Provide training and consulting opportunities, focusing on the digitizing of materials and managing digital projects, for staff of the cultural heritage institutions

Objectives 6.1 Implement a centralized training program that focuses on technical processes and program development relating to digitization (2002)

Activities:

- Review existing training program to identify needs/resources, developed by other collaborative. (A review of existing training programs was done as part of the development of the grant proposal/digital institute)
- Identify topics for training
- Identify methods for training
- Identify levels of stages of training needs
- Offer workshops and other training programs containing stepped levels of expertise to all cultural heritage institutions within the region
- Provide an online training program in addition to the classroom program
- Offer a workshop or conference on current digital preservation technologies

Objectives 6.2 To provide informational support to practitioner institutions, create a task force, including digitization experts in the area plus any web designers from various cultural organizations, to explore options for the best approach to guiding them to the existing toolsets (2003-05)

Activities:

- Explore needed regional information
- Identify existing practitioner toolkits available on the web
- Identify regional information resources for practitioners
- Develop knowledge base of experts on all aspects of digitization
- Provide a glossary of terms relating to digitization technologies and general records management practices
- Develop project plan for bringing up a website, including server location and support
- Design a mock-up website
- Preview and pre-test with a set of practitioners
- Implement the website project plan with the live, tested website
- Establish a technical assistance center (either physical or virtual) that provides technical support, advice, and expertise on issues relating to digitization
- Post criteria for inclusion into the program onto the website
- Market the service so practitioners know about the support that is available to them
- Establish a user group of practitioners supported with a listserv and round table or other in-person sessions

SECTION III

THE PLANNING PROCESS

SENYLRC has taken on the important role of coordinating and administering this regional planning process. One of the outcomes of the process is the fostering of a partnering and collaborative environment to include the members of the library community (public, academic, and special) and the museum, historical repository and archival communities. It is this collaboration that will ultimately lead to the identification and digitization of collections of importance in the region plus the long-term sustainability of any regional digital initiative. Such an effort is beyond the scope and mission of any single library or archival organization in the region, but together these organizations can create and provide access to resources of value, not only to the southeastern region of the state, but to all researchers throughout New York.

The first component of the planning process was the preparation of an assessment of past, current, and planned digitization projects within the southeastern region of New York. SENYLRC hired Eric Roth (Huguenot Historical Society) as its Digital Project Specialist to complete the assessment. His report identified major digital players inside and outside the region, identified region-wide subject areas and themes, identified project models, areas of focus, and potential challenges and roadblocks. (See the appendix for a copy of *Opportunities, Challenges, and Priorities: Developing A Collaborative Digitization Plan for the Mid-Hudson Valley*.)

The second component of the planning process was the formation of the Regional Digitization Advisory Task Force (RDATF) which functioned as the advisory body for digitization plan development within the region. Project consultants, Liz Bishoff, Director of the Colorado Digitization Project, and Nancy Allen, Director of the University of Denver Library, facilitated the planning process. As SENYLRC staff, Eric Roth, Karen Starr and John Shaloiko provided liaison support to the Task Force's planning activities.

Regional Digital Advisory Task Force

Merribeth Advocate (Mid-Hudson Library System)
John Ansley (Marist College)
Suzanne Christoff (U.S. Military Academy)
Tema Harnik (Lower Hudson Conference)
Jerry Kuntz (Ramapo Catskill Library System)
Mary McTamane (Newburgh Free Library)
Ron Patkus (Vassar College)
Christopher Raab (SUNY/New Paltz)
Peter Scheibner (Rockland County Archives)
Polly Townsend (Desmond Fish Library)
Duane Watson (Wilderstein Preservation)

The Need for Collaborative Digitization

Why does the region need a cooperative digitization plan? The professional literature clearly identifies several reasons for following this approach. Projects such as the Florida Heritage Project, the Colorado Heritage Project and Duke University recognize that through the Internet, digital information sharing is becoming a widespread, if not universal phenomenon that is creating more demand on the library and archival communities. Duke notes that “researchers and students increasingly look for information in digital form and publish their findings to an international audience via the global information infrastructure. These changes profoundly affect the way library users approach and use information and the way libraries respond to information needs. By seizing the inherent opportunities of digital technology, the library will become the hub of the knowledge network, exploiting our unique advantage to select, evaluate, and integrate

information dispersed across campus and across the world” (The Digital Library @ Duke: Report of the Digital Library Initiatives Task Group. [www.lib.duke.edu/dli/report/dli_report.htm#Executive Summary](http://www.lib.duke.edu/dli/report/dli_report.htm#Executive%20Summary)).

The Colorado Heritage Project offers a similar view, stating that “It is now feasible for information seekers to access full text, graphic, audio and video information via the Internet. ... Increased access to these unique and special resources can be realized by converting these materials to digital format. ... Through collaboration these resources, from across the state, can be delivered to the desktop in Colorado's schools, businesses, and homes” (The Colorado Heritage Project website: Colorado State Digitization Project Plan 1999-2002. <http://coloradodigital.coalition.org/projplan.html>).

Going even further, the Southeastern (U.S.) Universities Research Association demonstrates the problem of trying to locate information about collections and subjects on the Internet, even when the information is available online. The highly decentralized nature of digital collections results in electronic resources that are difficult to find and use, with neither popular search engines nor institutional websites adequately meeting the needs of today’s varied and numerous researchers. They argue that research would be improved by linking collection information at one institution to information at other institutions and by providing a means for researchers to retrieve information in context. Coordination in selection of materials for conversion would also improve the subject coverage of digital resources, allowing electronic collections to grow in both depth and breadth. A coordinated, distributed collection of cultural and historical materials would result in the development of more comprehensive collections for research, including the ability to build “virtual” collections of physically separated materials (*The American South: Program Planning for Resources in Culture and History*. Report to the Southeastern Universities Research Association from the SOLINET Planning Committee, April 2000.)

Response to Needs

In order to respond to these growing demands, several of the libraries, archives and museums in the southeastern region of New York have begun to work to create online access to the rich history documented in its archives, historical repositories and museums. Some of these leaders include the Special Collections Department at Vassar College, The U.S. Military Academy at West Point Cadet Library, and James A. Cannavino Library at Marist College in connection with the FDR Presidential Library and the Hudson River Environmental Society and Museum. Other active players include the Sojourner Truth Library at SUNY New Paltz, the Desmond-Fish Library in Garrison, the Newburgh Free Library, and the Huguenot Historical Society in New Paltz. These organizations are beginning to provide access to their holdings through their websites, but there is still no way to locate resources across institutions necessitating that users search each institution individually to locate heritage and historical resources.

SECTION IV

AUDIENCE FOR A DIGITIZATION PLAN – CONTRIBUTORS AND USERS

Certain stakeholders exist that represent those persons or organizations that have an interest in or can affect the work at hand. The RDATAF identified two specific sets of digital stakeholders within the region: contributors and users. In this case, contributors are the cultural institutions interested in making their collections accessible in an online digital environment. The users are the researchers who will use the information made accessible through the digitization process.

Contributors

- The cultural heritage institutions within the region that will be players in the digital program such as those listed in the *Historical Records Repositories of Southeastern New York*
- New York State Library and New York State Archives and Records Administration
- Southeastern New York Library Resources Council, Lower Hudson Conference, Mid-Hudson Library System, Ramapo Catskill Library System
- Internet service providers and other technological players
- Any institution or group or individual contributing materials to be included in the digital program
- Funding agencies
- Local governments
- Local chambers of commerce

Users

- Primary and secondary schools
- General public
- Academics, scholarly researchers and college-level students
- Institutional staff of the contributors
- Users from outside the region
- Local and state government offices, agencies and personnel
- The media
- Historical and research hobbyists
- Tourists

It was also mentioned that in some cases, users might also be contributors.

SECTION V

MANDATES

There are a variety of requirements under which an institution or region may operate. Such “mandates” may have an impact on the reasons why or how an institution or group of institutions collaborates on a digitizing initiative.¹

Legal mandates

- In New York State under Technology Policy 99-3, dated September 30, 1999, all New York State agency websites must provide universal accessibility to persons with disabilities (www.oft.state.ny.us/policy/99-3.htm)

Procedural (regulatory) mandates:

- Mission statement of Lower Hudson Conference, that serves to identify and support the needs of museums and historic sites within the region
- SENYLRC 5 Yr Plan which addresses digital issues (see 5 Yr Plan for specific goals and activities)
- Planning documents for Mid Hudson Library System and Ramapo Catskill Library System that addresses digital issues (see respective planning documents for specific goals and activities)
- Planning documents and mission statements of libraries, archives, museums and historical repositories in the region
- New York State Library’s LSTA 5 Year Plan
- New York State Historical Site Charter – identifies sites as education institutions and requires them to provide broad access to collections
- State education standards relating to primary source documents (identify educational standards which apply)
- Responsibilities of Federal sites to make National Archives Records Administration (NARA) collections available to public users (identify sources of responsibilities)
- State metadata standards necessary to receive grant funding

Perceived mandates

- Administrative pressures, specifically concerning public relations, and marketing
- Pressures on academic institutions to provide resources for distance learning
- Upper management push for website development in the region’s larger repositories
- The need to develop and publicize the identity of each individual institution
- Institutional validity for fundraising – ‘the prestige factor’ of being involved as a player in the region
- The need to keep current with interoperability and metadata solutions and standards
- The desires to be involved regionally in a collaborative effort
- Ethical obligations to make unique collections accessible, particularly in relation to fragile and unique materials

¹ *Legal mandates* are mandates that are required by law. Such mandates would appear in Federal, state, or local statutes. *Regulatory mandates* are mandates that appear in the rules or policies of the organization or in other organizational documentation, such as plans, official memos, etc. Regulatory mandates usually have more to do with procedures rather than policies. They may be requirements of the bureaucracy of the organization. *Perceived mandates* are mandates that members of the organization believe are required of them by their clientele or by other environmental factors.

SECTION VI

THE REGIONAL DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Overview

Digitization currently plays an important role for a small number of repositories within the region, most notably Marist College working in collaboration with the FDR Library, USMA at West Point, SUNY New Paltz, the Newburgh Free Library, and the Desmond-Fish Library in Garrison. The majority of repositories within the region, however, feel that they are unready to make the commitment to participate in large-scale collaborative digitization projects. They lack the necessary expertise, infrastructure, and resources to lead or fully participate in digitization projects, specifically in relation to the primary source materials that most feel should be the first items targeted for digitization. The large amount of the historical treasures still lying in the region's repositories remains unorganized, uncataloged, and largely inaccessible.

Among the small number of repositories that have experimented with digitization, the large majority of these efforts have been small-scale and non-collaborative. The attitudes and approaches toward digitization can largely be described in terms of repository-types, with marked differences noticeable between government agencies, academic libraries, public libraries, and private organizations, although some exceptions are evident. The past and current projects in the region exhibit a variety of different approaches, processes, and subject matter, with no single initiative yet proving to be the dominant model for the region.

The Regional Digital Advisory Task Force, in discussing these issues, have identified the specific internal and external environmental factors that may affect the success of the collaborative program. Internally, the group listed the strengths and weaknesses that are inherent to the organizations involved with the project. The group also identified the external opportunities and threats that will affect the group's ability to move forward.

Strengths

- Lack of large-scale digitization projects within the region, which positions the area well for collaboration without pre-conditions for specific digitization protocols
- Variety and richness of collections
- History of cooperation among libraries and repositories within the region (SENYLRC, LHC, and public library systems)
- Shared themes
- Regional character
- Presence of institutions capable of taking the lead in cooperative projects
- Diversity and history of region
- Increased requests for access to unique collections as a result of the growth of the Internet
- No large academic library within the region, enabling a "level playing field" for collaborative development

Weaknesses

- Lack of funding
- Lack of large-scale digitization project within the region, resulting in a lack of experience
- Lack of catalogs and union lists for collections within the region, particularly archival
- Lack of staffing resources, particularly staffing trained in digitization and related technical fields
- Leadership limitations relating to digitization efforts at the state level
- Communication difficulties involved in large scale collaborative projects that involve multiple organizations and state agencies
- Large geographical area that causes difficulties in communication
- Digitization is not seen as a high priority among many regional repositories
- No central location for information regarding digital topics
- There will always be newcomers to the digitization process, regardless of the level of progress attained by the region's digital players
- Lack of appreciation among regional repositories of issues of digital publication
- Increase demand of actual collections due to digital offerings, which is a perceived risk to preservation of original artifacts

Opportunities

- Potential technical partners such as IBM, ALOS, and Hudson Microimaging, Inc.
- Early planning now in progress before the region becomes too involved in digitization
- The development and provision of standards for regional players to use when implementing projects
- The ability to improve the base of knowledge of collections held within the region
- State education curriculum that requires use of primary source materials in the classroom
- Region designated as a National Heritage Area
- Increase of distance learning
- The ability to preserve fragile materials through digitization by reducing the need to handle the original materials
- Availability of outside digitization experts and external research resources
- Cost savings through centralization and collaboration
- Cohort groups (primarily businesses) interested in building regional telecommunications infrastructures
- External funding available
- Reaching out to tourism community and attached revenue
- Greater access to commercial vendors
- Planning as required for funding allocation

Threats

- Budget cuts
- Changing standards and formats, leading to difficulties in long-term management, sustainability and migration of digital information
- The possibility of organizations becoming overwhelmed with user demand for collections due to digitization
- Commercial competition

SECTION VII

COLLABORATION FOR DIGITIZATION

Why should cultural heritage institutions collaborate?

Liz Bishoff, Project Director of the Colorado Digitization Project, states that libraries, archives, and museums are the ‘memory’ organizations of a society. They organize and maintain the memory of peoples, communities, institutions and individuals; as well as the scientific, cultural products throughout time of our imagination, craft, and learning. Cultural heritage institutions hold our legacy to future generations. They are an important part of the civic fabric, woven into people’s working and imaginative lives and into the public identity of communities. They are social assembly places, whose use and civic presence acknowledges their significance and social value.

Working collaboratively, cultural heritage institutions in the digital age can explore ways to provide learning, research and cultural opportunities for visitors; identify and grow new communities of users; develop strategies for creation and preservation of digital objects; and identify common issues and goals that can be resolved together. They can also work towards the resolution of common goals such as increasing the values of our heritage for new creative uses; exploring what a virtual civic presence means; and exploring sustainable economic models supporting development and equitable access to cultural heritage. Such a project contains the potential to increase the demand for and use of primary source materials, help people find and use resources, integrate disparate collections, support distance and lifelong learning, and support K-12 standards.

However, developing and maintaining a successful collaborative project is not without its challenges. One of these challenges lies in the fact that there are several different types of cultural heritage institutions with different aims, objectives, and methods. For example, libraries and museums use very different methods for managing and providing access to their collections. There are also differences in their philosophies regarding the access to and preservation and use of their collections. Other challenges arise in relation to technological problems, budgeting and staff limitations, competition between institutions, and promoting new policies and methods relating to collections and services to end users.

Bishoff noted several essential elements of success for collaborative projects. It is important to start with everyone at the table and come to an early agreement on the intended audiences of the project. It is also important to recognize the importance of flexibility and creative problem solving. Collaborative projects usually involve some degree of risk if they are to succeed. Participants need to understand these risks and agree to move forward with the project even in the face of risk. Finally, the participants must recognize that they may have common goals, but they may also have different missions, organizational cultures, and funding structures.

Other elements of success gained through experience include having strong leadership that travels across different types of institutions, the ability to find new solutions that represent

hybrids between museums and libraries, open-mindedness to different ways of doing things, recognizing what libraries and museums have in common, and maintaining a certain degree of respect and collegiality during all meetings and communications. Things that worked against successful projects included participants being too committed to one course of action, failing to recognize knowledge gaps among partners, not thinking enough about potential problems, forgetting to talk about project users, and not enough face to face communication.

Bishoff outlined the key areas of digitization projects: selection, legal issues, access, scanning, governance, and funding. In relation to selecting collections for digitization, she remarked that primary sources are widely distributed throughout the library and museum communities, but many such collections may not necessarily be cataloged or inventoried. Examining past surveys, or developing a selection approach based on thematic or subject-based content are ways that collaborative digital projects can use to select materials for digitization.

For the rest of the key areas, it is important to look at what other collaborative digitization projects have determined, especially in terms of metadata (information about information) and scanning standards, and governance and infrastructure. Unfortunately, the current technological environment is incomplete and unpredictable. Specifically in relation to metadata, it is important to note that the different types of institutions maintain different types of metadata. Libraries create and maintain catalog records, while archives create finding aids. Museums and historical societies may use registrar records, inventory systems, or even hybrid system taking elements from all three metadata types. Further, in relation to standards, there is much differentiation. Libraries typically have very strong, established standards for metadata, subject headings and technological access, while archives standards are only just now emerging in the archival community. Museums and historical societies usually have few standards, with a large variety of local variants.

In summary, the challenges to be faced by digital collaborate projects will involve the following elements:

- different missions and revenue sources across institutional partners,
- different sets of standards (or even lack of standards) involving technology, metadata, and collection management,
- limited technological and digitization expertise, poor preparation of collections, different approaches to dissemination,
- the question of local control vs. global access,
- the lack of sustainable funding model, and most of all,
- developing a strong and consistent model for project leadership.

SECTION VIII

EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

The strategic goals, objectives, and activities in this plan are intended to be enabling and to provide the combined southeastern New York library, museum and archival community with a means by which it can measure its continuing activities relating to digitization. For each goal, the following criteria will be met to measure its attainment.

Goal 1 Organizational Infrastructure

Create a cross-organizational steering committee comprised of representatives from seven to nine key institutions in the region to guide the implementation initiatives for this regional digital effort

Evaluative Criteria 1.1 The Digital Advisory Steering Committee will be established

Goal 2 Collection Selection Criteria

Establish selection criteria to identify target collections to be digitized by cultural heritage institutions within the southeastern New York region

Evaluative Criteria 2.1: A sub-task force will submit, and the Steering Committee will approve a report providing guidelines for the scope, content, and formats of materials to be included in the regional collaborative project

Goal 3 Standards

Agree upon and adopt standards for metadata and scanning that will facilitate collaborative digitization

Evaluative Criteria 3.1: A sub-task force will submit, and the Steering Committee will approve, a report providing standards for covering all aspects of metadata creation, structure, content to be used in the regional collaborative project

Evaluative Criteria 3.2: A sub-task force will submit, and the Steering Committee will approve, a report providing standards for covering all aspects of scanning, including image capture, resolution, and compression to be used in the regional collaborative project

Evaluative Criteria 3.3: The southeastern region will have a written and online guide to standards, references and web-based technical information to be used in the regional collaborative project

Goal 4 Legal Issues

Identify the legal issues relating to digitizing collections and develop an awareness strategy to educate the staff of the regional cultural heritage institutions that are contemplating digitizing a collection

Evaluative Criteria 4.1: The southeastern New York region will have in place workshops and written and online resources supporting museum, archival, and library professional decision making related to legal issues and creating digital content

Goal 5 Accessible Collections

Create a regional collection of digital objects, contributed by cultural heritage institutions within the southeastern New York region, which is open, distributed and easily accessible by the public

Evaluative Criteria 5.1: A sub-task force will submit, and the Steering Committee will approve, a report outlining the forms by which the southeastern region will provide access to collections held within the region

Evaluative Criteria 5.2: The Steering Committee will have in place a strategy to increase awareness of the digital collections and regional repositories that contribute them

Evaluative Criteria 5.3: A sub-task force will submit, and the Steering Committee will approve, a report recommending strategies, techniques, and technologies to be used in the regional collaborative project to ensure the long-term storage of digital content

Goal 6 Training

Provide training and consulting opportunities, focusing on the digitizing of materials and managing digital projects, for staff of the cultural heritage institutions

Evaluative Criteria 6.1: The southeastern New York region will have in place a continuing centralized training program including workshops and online and written tutorials focusing on digitization issues and techniques

Evaluative Criteria 6.2: The southeastern New York region will have in place a website that provides technical support, advice, and expertise on issues relating to digitization

SECTION IX

TIMELINE (2001-2006)

OBJECTIVE	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1.1: Establish Steering Comm						
1.2: Implementation Strategies						
1.3: Structure for Program & Fiscal Administration						
2.1: Explore Collaboration						
2.2: Establish Target Collection Guidelines						
3.1: Explore Metadata Issues						
3.2: Recommend metadata						
3.3: Explore Scanning Standards						
3.4: Recommend Scan Standards						
4.1: Develop support materials for decision-making relating to legal issues						
4.2: Copyright and Intellectual Property Rights.						
4.3: Training Sessions on Legal Issues						
5.1: Access Recommendations						
5.2: Engage repositories						
5.3: Develop digital preservation strategy						
6.1: Training Program						
6.2: Practitioner Support						

APPENDIX

OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, AND PRIORITIES: DEVELOPING A COLLABORATIVE DIGITIZATION PLAN FOR THE MID-HUDSON VALLEY. A Report submitted to the Southeastern New York Regional Digital Task Force by Eric J. Roth, May 2001.