



Digitization Strategy

Approved 31 January 2020. Last updated 8 January 2024.

1. Purpose

This digitization strategy aims to provide a framework that will allow the University of Alberta Libraries to effectively and predictably manage our digitization program. Its primary goals are to:

- create a framework for selecting and prioritizing proposed projects
- create defined and well-understood processes for proposing and approving digitization projects
- identify stakeholders and their roles for digitization at the University of Alberta Library (UAL)

2. Principles: Why do we digitize?

We digitize to:

- Offer unique, distinctive, and diverse collections to the world.
- Enable access to materials which are otherwise hidden, non-circulating, or geographically contained.
- Provide open access to our collections for the widest of audiences.
- Support research, teaching and learning for the University of Alberta and communities, including the general public.
- Support and improve the accessibility of materials for all audiences, reducing barriers where possible through universal design.
- Support access and use of collections in digital format, both for human and machine reading.
- Leverage the existing investment in acquiring and preserving materials of all types and physical formats.

For the digitization program, we strive to:

- Enable timely access to material and minimal latency from when materials are scanned to when materials are available for use.
- Create access to materials that are otherwise not available digitally or difficult to access.
- Convert and describe materials for optimal discovery and access.
- Deliver formats and file types required by all potential users.



- Be respectful of the needs of Indigenous knowledge sovereignty, in addition but not limited to cultural property rights.
- Ensure our digitization strategy and technical infrastructure environment are aligned.
- Anticipate rights and access issues so that these do not create artificial barriers to access.
- Commit to open collaborations and partnerships.

3. Criteria: What do we digitize?

The Criteria for Selection are meant to be applied whenever digitization takes place, whether at the object level or the collection level.

Value (Research, teaching and learning)

- Materials of significant historical value.
- Materials of significant cultural value.
- Materials of regional significance.
- Collections of distinction: materials or collections that are subjects of strength at the University of Alberta.
- Materials of significant educational value to students and faculty at the University of Alberta; materials that meet regional, national, and global research, teaching, and e-learning needs.
- Materials are likely to be of high public interest.
- Collections that recognize and support Indigenous cultures, languages and knowledge, developed through respectful partnerships with local Indigenous stakeholders.
- Content linked to curriculum needs for courses taught at the University of Alberta.

Uniqueness / Rarity

- Unique or rare materials that are scarcely held elsewhere in print, or where the copy we intend to digitize is unique in some way.
- Materials not well-represented in other digital collections or projects at University of Alberta or other institutions.
- Materials that have yet to be digitized and made openly available by another digital repository; materials that have been digitized but the available surrogate contains errors or other quality issues that affect use.

Use

- Materials known to have high use, or high potential for use once they are digitized and findable online.



- Materials for which a digital surrogate has been explicitly requested.
- Materials that present few legal or other barriers to full public online sharing.
- Materials or content that would benefit significantly from value-added enhancements, such as search capabilities, text manipulations, and interpretive commentary.

Preservation

- Materials which are too fragile or damaged to be handled safely but are stable enough to be digitized.
- Content that is at risk for loss due to the inherent instability of the format or format obsolescence.

Access

- Collections that support open access to the University's unique and distinct collections
- Materials that would benefit from the creation of virtual collections or the linking of geographically dispersed originals.
- Materials for which digitization will increase usability for users with disabilities.
- Materials of potentially high interest to geographically remote users.

Continuity/Critical Mass

- Collections or materials that build upon existing University digital holdings and projects.
- Materials that resolve identified gaps in existing collections: for example, missing issues of serial publications.
- Materials that expand coverage of a subject or theme are available as digital content at other institutions.

Collaboration

- Collections or materials identified for collaborative projects with other institutions.
- Collections or materials identified to contribute to a shared digital corpus.

Development

- Collections or materials with the potential to attract donors and support Library Development.
- Collections or materials with the potential to receive support through grants and other forms of external support.



4. Feasibility: Can we digitize?

These considerations determine whether digitization according to our principles is possible. A feasibility assessment should include an analysis of:

Rights and privacy considerations

- Are there any legal or ethical barriers to digitizing and making accessible these materials?
- Considerations include privacy, copyright, appropriate treatment of Traditional and Indigenous knowledge protection protocols and agreements, and other rights.
- Do we need to establish access models which affirm Indigenous communities' rights to their data sovereignty?

Physical condition

- Are the materials stable enough to be handled for digitization?
- Do materials need to undergo prior treatment before it can be digitized, such as repairs and/or disbinding or rebinding?

Technical requirements

- Do we have the equipment and infrastructure to digitize and make these materials appropriately accessible?

Metadata requirements

- What are the metadata needs for this project?

5. Digitization program categories

UAL's digitization program supports three general streams of production services. They are:

Scheduled projects

Targeted items or collections that support the principles of our digitization program and are scoped as projects for digitization, prioritized and scheduled for a given period. Digitized materials should support the research, teaching, and learning goals of our campus community and the public at large, where possible.



Opportunity-based projects

Projects of opportunity are associated with external funding sources or other factors which create a compelling and sometimes urgent need to undertake a project. The projects should align with the principles of the larger program and the direction of the library strategy. External funding sources may include grants or advancement planning opportunities.

On-demand digitization

On-demand digitization of items or collections is typically prompted by one-off requests or a need to provide access to collections that are otherwise inaccessible to users. This could include issues of accessibility, e.g. visual or learning challenges. It could also include requests for non-circulating collections, as well as out-of-print materials. On-demand digitization is not intended to replace reproduction services [offered by other library departments](#), which fall outside the scope of this strategy.

6. Workflows

Digitization projects may be initiated by UAL or partner organizations, affiliated researchers, or members of the community or the general public. UAL may fund these projects or may be associated with external funding sources or other factors, which create a compelling and sometimes urgent need to undertake a project. All projects should align with the principles of the digitization program and the direction of the library strategy and will be assessed against the digitization criteria. Projects will be approved and prioritized by the [Digitization Team](#).



Major Projects

Stage 1: Initial suggestion

Request to digitize item, collection or group of items or collections by emailing digitization@ualberta.ca or filling out the [proposal form](#).

May be initiated by:

- UAL
- UofA affiliated individual or group
- Member of the community

Delegate from the Digitization Team leads preliminary investigation and makes decision based on a "test fit" to UAL's principles and criteria as outlined in [our digitization strategy](#).

Stage 2: Full investigation

Together with stakeholders, Delegate from the Digitization Team leads an investigation into the feasibility and suitability of the project. Develops a [full proposal](#) for selection and prioritization stage.

Stage 3: Selection and prioritization

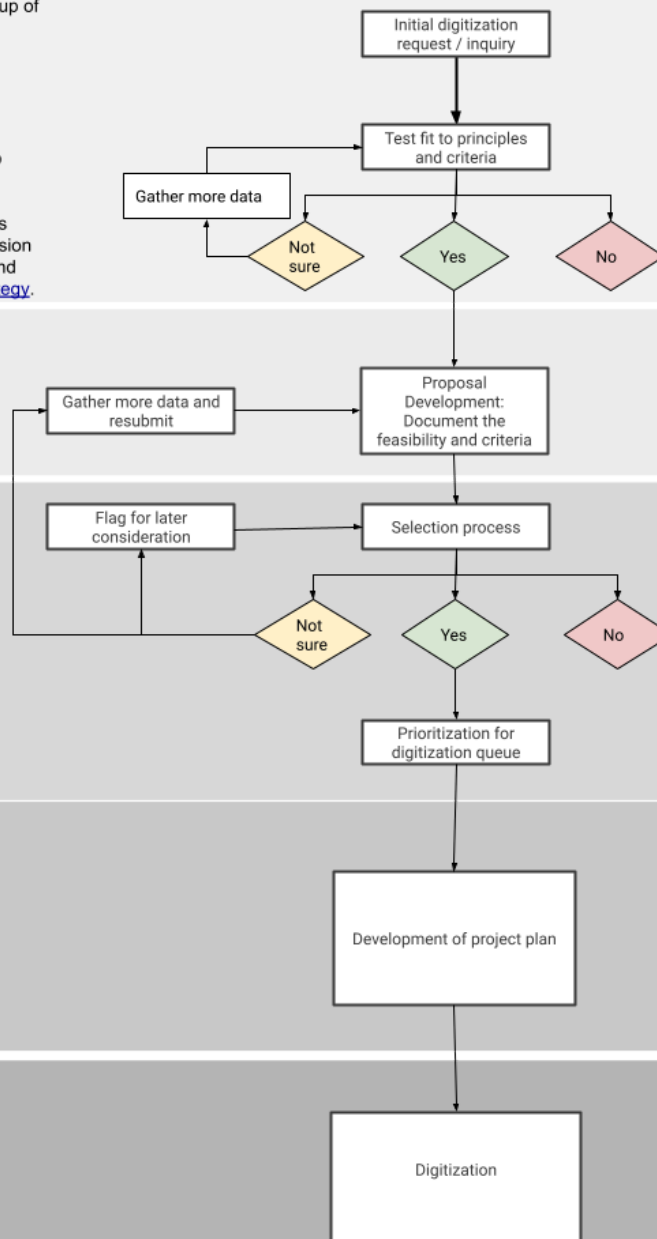
Depending on the scope and complexity, the Digitization Team makes decisions, and prioritizes projects, considering proposals and established criteria,

Stage 4: Project planning

Once approved, Digitization Librarian works with team to develop project plan: establishing scope, milestones, timelines, and workplan.

Stage 5: Project implementation and production

Digitization and associated activities carried out according to the plan and adjusted as necessary.





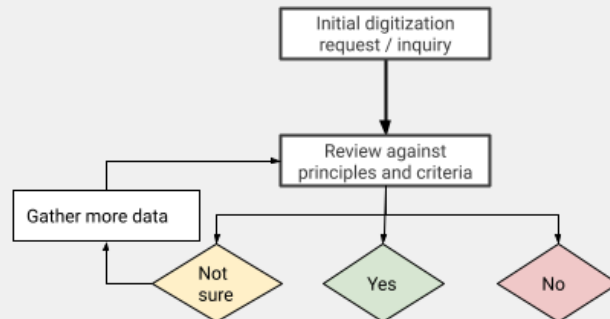
Minor Projects

Stage 1: Initial suggestion and proposal
Request to digitize item, collection or group of items or collections.

May be initiated by:

- UAL
- Partner organizations
- UofA affiliated individual or group
- Member of broader community

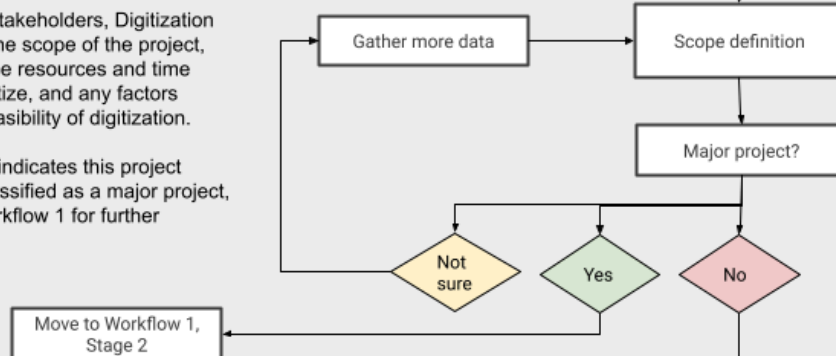
Digitization Team leads preliminary investigation and requests approval to move forward from Head, Library Publishing and Digital Production Services



Stage 2: Scope definition

Together with stakeholders, Digitization Team defines the scope of the project, documenting the resources and time required to digitize, and any factors affecting the feasibility of digitization.

If investigation indicates this project should be reclassified as a major project, it moves to Workflow 1 for further investigation.



Stage 4: Project planning

Once scope is completed, DI Projects Librarian works with team to develop project plan: establishing milestones, timelines, and workplan.



Stage 5: Project implementation and production

Digitization and associated activities carried out according to the plan and adjusted as necessary.



7. Roles and Responsibilities

Digitization Requester

May be internal or external: UAL, an external partner organization (eg museum, historical society, library), UofA affiliated individual or group, or a member of the broader community. The digitization client may initiate a digitization request directly, or through a referral from another area or organization.

Digitization Team

The Digitization Team provides oversight and prioritization of UAL's digitization program through the active review and management of the Digitization Strategy, and the selection and prioritization of major digitization projects. This group determines the principles and criteria that guide the selection of materials for digitization along with the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in digitization activities. [[Terms of Reference](#)]

Digitization Librarian

Leads investigations into digitization project proposals, defines and documents scope and feasibility, and develops digitization project plans. Engages key stakeholders throughout these processes, especially the person or group initiating the request, the Metadata Team, the Copyright Office, and digitization service providers and vendors.

Project Liaison

The Project Liaison collaborates with the Digitization Librarian and is responsible for addressing questions about new digitization proposals and facilitating the gathering of additional information. Typical questions include an evaluation of the research value of the material, demonstrating the uniqueness of the collection, etc. This includes following up with proposals that have been submitted and are outstanding. After a proposal is accepted and digitization is underway, the liaison would be expected to take on an active role in any outreach activities, which could include writing collection descriptions, advising on areas to promote the collection etc. Project liaisons could be the original project proposer or someone assigned to the project with collection knowledge.



Heads, Open Publishing and Digitization Services and Digital Production and Preservation Services

As members of the Digitization Team, they direct and oversee services, production workflows, training, advocacy, assessment, resource planning, and support. Ensure communication across teams and service areas related to digitization.

Metadata Team

Provides expert advice and input throughout on the scope, approach and feasibility of digitization projects and defines metadata requirements. Participates in project planning and implementation. Consult and work with other teams in Cataloguing & Metadata Strategies as needed.

Copyright Office

Provides expert advice, guidance and support related to copyright and the feasibility of digitization projects. Consults on specific copyright requirements.

Digitization Team

Carries out the work of digitization projects, including planning, investigation, proposal development, scope definition, implementation, and assessment.

Digitization Service Provider (vendor)

Carries out different components of digitization as contracted by UAL, including digitization, metadata, image processing, custom metadata, and others as required.