

# University of Alberta Library Digitization Strategy

Last updated 17 October 2025.

# 1. Purpose

This digitization strategy aims to provide a framework that will allow the University of Alberta Library 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 the stakeholders and their roles in the University of Alberta Library's (UAL) digitization process.

# 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 materials and minimal latency from when materials are scanned to when they are available for use.



- Create access to materials that are otherwise not available digitally or are 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 to, 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 intended to be applied whenever digitization occurs, 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, meeting 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 are not well-represented in other digital collections or projects at the University
  of Alberta or other institutions.
- Materials that have yet to be digitized and made openly available by another digital repository, or materials that have been digitized but the available surrogate contains errors or other quality issues that affect their use.



#### Use

- Materials known to have high use or high potential for use become available 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 require prior treatment before they can be digitized, such as repairs, 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 are 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

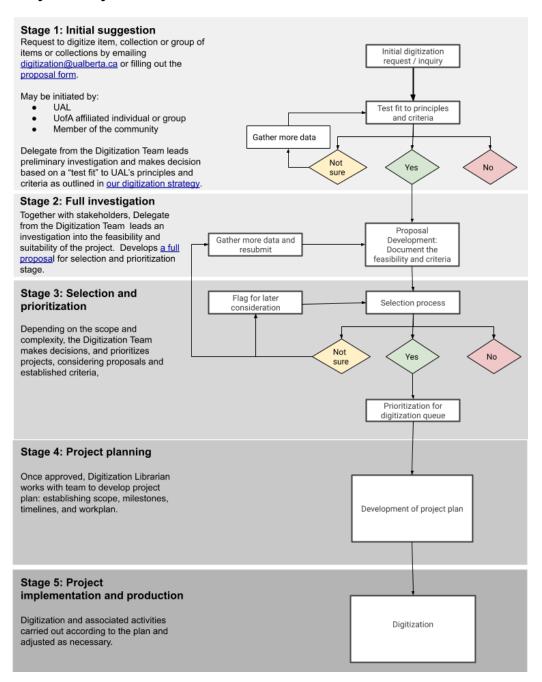
On-demand digitization of items or collections is typically prompted by one-off requests or a need to provide access to collections that are otherwise inaccessible to users. This could include issues of accessibility, e.g., visual or learning challenges. It could also include requests for non-circulating 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 be associated with external funding sources or other factors that 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 <u>Digitization Team</u>.

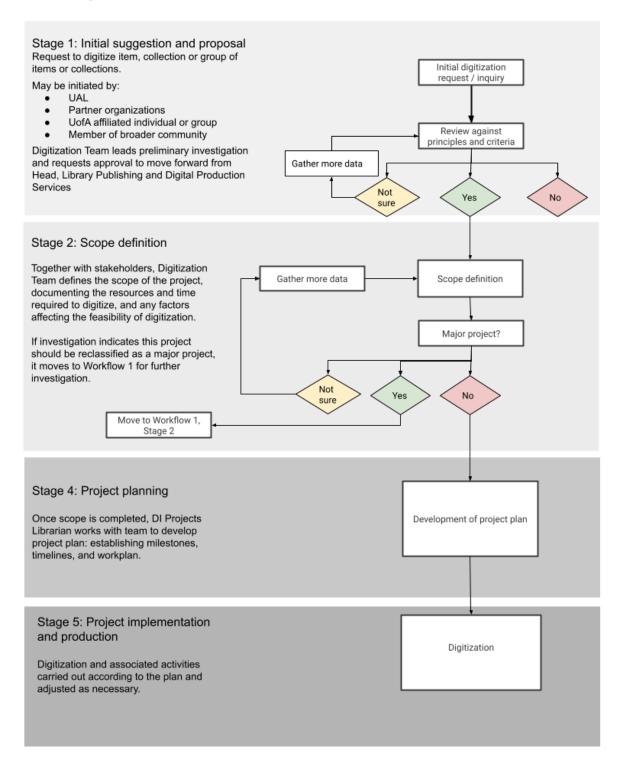


#### **Major Projects**





#### Minor Projects





# 7. Roles and Responsibilities

#### Digitization Requester

May be internal or external: UAL, an external partner organization (e.g., museum, historical society, library), U of A 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 the 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**

Digitization project liaisons serve important and multiple roles, as proponents and content experts. Their input before, during, and after a project is accepted and implemented is key to the success of the digitization program. Liaisons are expected to:

- be a Library or University of Alberta employee, but not necessarily a Librarian or member of the Digitization Team;
- review the digitization strategy;
- either be named on the Digitization Proposal or be assigned shortly after the proposal is submitted;
- meet with the Digitization Librarian, if needed, to clarify and provide information related to the proposal, including:
  - an evaluation of the research value of the material, demonstrating the uniqueness of the collection,



- assessing ethical and legal considerations (e.g., providing subject knowledge to help complete copyright, privacy, and other risk assessments related to digitization and access;
- take an active role in suggesting, implementing, and assessing any outreach activities, which could include communications duties, such as writing collection descriptions, advising on areas and strategies to promote the collection, etc.

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

As members of the Digitization Team 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. Consults and works 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.