

Laying the Building Blocks for Our Collaborative Digital Future: Outreach at the University of Vermont Libraries' Center for Digital Initiatives

The digitization of special collections will become increasingly collaborative as demand for digital delivery rises, resources are stretched thinner, and interoperability improves. Implemented well, collaborative digitization can demonstrate the relevancy of special collections, enhance primary source research, and foster user communities.

This shift towards digital cooperation is evident in major undertakings (e.g. HathiTrust, World Digital Library) and grant funding patterns.¹ Though many smaller-scaled programs have long featured partnered back-end and collection development,² the RBMS community has been urged to further involve scholarly users³ and to implement active engagement strategies⁴ in our digital programs.

The University of Vermont (UVM) Libraries' Special Collections is leading this charge by redefining its Center for Digital Initiatives (CDI). The CDI's primary goal is for students, faculty, staff, scholars, and community members to participate as users and creators of digital research collections in an open, collaborative environment.

With the CDI's second IMLS grant, I was hired as the Digital Initiatives Outreach Librarian to build an engaged user community which participates in CDI development, content and services. In this presentation, I will share the goals, best practices, and lessons of our:

- New collection proposal process
- Cultivation strategies
- Partner commitments & workflow
- Collaborative metadata creation
- Joint publicity campaigns

To illustrate the impact of these activities, I will highlight recent collections and diverse new audiences as well as share our assessment results. This session will greatly benefit institutions seeking effective, practical ways to make special collections digitization more participatory and collaborative.

Submitted by:

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I am a current member of RBMS. This proposal has not been accepted for publication or presentation elsewhere.

¹ e.g., JISC/NEH Transatlantic Digitization Collaboration Grants. Web. 25 Oct. 2009. <<http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/JISC.html>>.

Nineteen of fifty-one IMLS National Leadership Grants awarded this year include the word "collaboration." National Leadership Grants. Web. 25 Oct. 2009. <http://www.imls.gov/news/2009/092409b_list.shtm>.

The Mellon Foundation aims to serve various constituents, multiple institutions, and to produce shareable technologies. Research in Information Technology. Web. 25 Oct. 2009 <http://www.mellon.org/internet/grant_programs/programs/rit>.

² e.g., Bunker, Geri and Greg Zick. "Collaboration as a Key to Digital Library Development: High Performance Image Management at the University of Washington." D-Lib Magazine 5.3 (1999). Web. 25 Oct. 2009. <<http://www.dlib.org/dlib/march99/bunker/03bunker.html>>.

e.g., Bishop, Monday. "Interoperability and Standards in a Museum/Library Collaborative: The Colorado Digitization Project." First Monday 5.6 (2000). Web. 25 Oct. 2009. <http://outreach.lib.uic.edu/www/issues/issue5_6/bishoff/>.

³ Proffitt, Merrilee and Jennifer Schaffner. The Impact of Digitizing Special Collections on Teaching and Scholarship: Reflections on a Symposium about Digitization and the Humanities. Dublin, OH: OCLC, 2008. Web. 25 Oct. 2009. <<http://www.oclc.org/research/publications/library/2008/2008-04.pdf>>.

⁴ See "Case Study 3" in Miller, Kelly, et al. RBMS Preconference. Charlottesville, VA. 19 Jun. 2009. Seminar F: "Finding Common Ground: CLIR Postdoctoral Fellows on Scholarly Engagement." Web. 25 Oct. 2009. <http://rbms.info/conferences/preconfdocs/2009/SeminarF_Finding_Common_Ground_RBMS2009.pdf>.