



LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

Digitization and Digital Projects Policy Statement September 2008

Introduction

Among the Library of Virginia's many responsibilities, perhaps the most demanding is the Code of Virginia mandate to collect, preserve and make publicly accessible information created by state and local governments, as well as materials related to the history and culture of the commonwealth.

The Library's state and local collections represent a substantial portion of our archival holdings and are complemented by equally compelling collections of personal papers, business records, photographic images, printed works, and fine art. Unique and unsurpassed, these irreplaceable records document the history of the commonwealth and its citizens.

Library staff members feel strongly their responsibility as stewards of the collections entrusted to their care, ensuring that those treasures remain safe and accessible to the citizens of the commonwealth. Since 1994, the Library of Virginia has digitized various parts of our holdings. Our efforts include millions of chancery court records and numerous image and index databases, all available online at no cost to users; the National Digital Newspaper Program; the State Publications Depository Program; and partnerships with the Library of Congress to make religious petitions and Civil War maps widely available. The demand for increased online access to our collections, coupled with often limited fiscal and staff resources, makes balancing free access to digital collections with wise allocation of limited assets a continuing challenge.

Scope

This document summarizes our approach to creating digital collections, outlines our objectives for providing online access to digital versions of items in our collections, and defines our considerations when digitizing for public access.

Approach to creating digital collections

The Library's Agency Strategic Plan, Code of Ethics, and Code of Virginia mandated responsibilities will provide the framework within which we will conceptualize, create, and manage digital projects.

As staff and budgetary resources permit, the Library will give preference to the development and maintenance of its own digital projects.

The Library will protect the intellectual property content of all records entrusted to its care and maintain clearly defined intellectual property rights of any digital or

microfilm copies of these records and any related indexing or other metadata created to support a digital project. Whenever possible, digital collections will be made available at no cost to the citizens of Virginia.

The Library may consider projects proposed by the public, other government agencies, or commercial entities; however, we will retain ultimate authority and the right to decline projects that do not fit institutional priorities or meet our core mission and responsibilities.

Partnerships

The Library has a strong history of creating partnerships in order to make our collections more widely accessible. When digital partnerships are considered, the Library will strive to create agreements that are primarily related to the core mission, vision, and values of our institution; do not violate our obligations to the citizens of the commonwealth; and are steadfast in the provision of free access to our digital collections for all Virginians in perpetuity. The Library may limit the number of partnerships in order to facilitate oversight and ensure quality of projects.

All projects, regardless of whether they are done in partnership or solely by the Library, will meet professional standards for digitization and description, undergo quality assurance review, and be continually evaluated to ensure the best product possible is delivered to the user.

Digitizing objectives

The Library of Virginia has defined the following objectives for digitizing parts of our collections:

- Provide Virginia residents and other users increased access to the Library's collections, including government information, unique or rare materials, and historic records that meet research and educational needs.
- Provide access to materials that can no longer be accessed due to format obsolescence.
- Protect original records by reducing frequent handling during reference use or reproduction through digitization. Under normal circumstances, digital projects will be for access only, not preservation. However, projects may include a preservation component when continual handling could do irreparable harm to the material.

In meeting these objectives the Library will:

- Develop projects that can be utilized by a variety of user groups for broad research, learning, and general informational purposes. To this end, the Library will establish criteria outlining collection selection, metadata creation,

and systems for access that address the varied interests and needs of our user population.

- Create digital collections that enhance user understanding of the value of the record, its authenticity, archival context, and historical significance.
- Provide a stable, scalable, and sustainable platform for the delivery and long-term management of digital content.
- Strive to deliver content in ever-evolving ways, challenging our project developers to create a premier user experience with appealing and worthwhile projects using the best practices and best technologies available.
- Use our resources responsibly. Staff, budgetary resources, and long-term sustainability of digital materials will be evaluated before any project is undertaken.
- Review projects for continued applicability. Just as not all materials are suitable for digitizing, the value of existing projects may be reconsidered from time to time. In some cases, additional resources may be expended when enhanced accessibility will benefit our users and increase usefulness. Conversely, there may be occasions when a digital project outlives its value and will be discontinued.

In conclusion, the Library of Virginia takes very seriously our role as stewards of not only the material resources in our care, but also our fiscal and capital assets, as we continually strive to meet, and possibly exceed, the expectations and confidence bestowed by the public trust. As such, this document will guide us in the creation of new and noteworthy digital collections and will be reviewed regularly for continued relevance and adherence to our mission and mandates.