Committee on Digital Initiatives

End of FY2014 Report
by Julia Lovett, Digital Initiatives Librarian, Chair

Introduction

The URI Libraries’ Committee on Digital Initiatives formed in January 2013, with a charge to:

- Identify immediate priorities and long-term goals for creating, managing, and using digital collections in the University Libraries
- Develop digital collections procedures, including:
  - Selection/prioritization of materials for digitization
  - Metadata guidelines
  - Digitization standards and workflows
  - Copyright and fair use guidelines
  - Procedures for training new staff
- Explore digital preservation needs and options
- Identify current and projected technology needs, including digitization equipment, content management systems, and storage space
- Identify current and projected staffing roles and necessary skills
- Collaborate with other campus stakeholders as necessary, such as: ITS, academic faculty and staff, students, and University administration

Our membership currently consists of Julia Lovett, Sarina Rodrigues, Angel Ferria, Mimi Keefe, and Mark Dionne.

The Committee’s charge also states “At the end of each fiscal year, the Committee will submit a report to the Managers.” This is the first report, covering from January 2013 to June 2014.

The Committee met on an approximately monthly basis between January 2013 and June 2014. One of the group’s initial efforts was to create a strategic plan for digital collections in the University Libraries. In the spring of 2013, I also wrote an overall strategic plan for Digital Initiatives as part of a Technical Services Department push for unit-level plans. After several drafts, in September 2013 the Committee agreed to adopt the relevant sections of the Digital Initiatives Strategic Plan. The three-year goals of the plan are to:

- Create, Manage, and Disseminate Digital Content
  - Goal 1: Centralize digitization activities
  - Goal 2: Implement a digital preservation strategy
  - Goal 3: Ensure seamless access to digital content
• Support Born-Digital Materials
  o Goal 4: Support data management at URI
  o Goal 5: Support born-digital content accessioned to the Archives

The group recommended that more details should be added to the plan, especially budgets and staffing needs. We have not yet revisited the Plan to add these details.

In our first year and a half, we have made significant progress in the area of “Creating, Managing, and Disseminating Digital Content”, Goals 1-3. In particular, we have centralized digitization activities into a lab space, taken some first steps towards digital preservation, and are currently transferring most digitized content into Shared Shelf by ArtStor.

**Progress on Goal 1: Centralize Digitization Activities**

In the fall of 2013, with startup funding granted by the Provost and office space provided by the Library, we set up a Digital Lab with the intention of centralizing all digitization into this space. The Lab currently contains:

- Two iMacs equipped with Adobe Acrobat and Photoshop
- One large format Epson scanner
- A tower of playback equipment (the “rack”) for digitizing audio, video and film (previously housed in Special Collections)

Student workers on both the Digital Initiatives and Special Collections payroll have worked in the Lab during the past year, scanning and editing a variety of print materials from the Archives and Special Collections. We are hoping to begin digitizing audiovisual materials, such as oral histories, this summer.

In addition to physically consolidating our digitization efforts, we have shifted the emphasis organizationally for digitization policies and procedures, which now fall under the purview of the Digital Initiatives Librarian and the Committee. We have consolidated the separate digitization procedures being used in Digital Initiatives and Special Collections into standard procedures (documented in the Tech Services Wiki). We have also set up a workflow for patron requested ("on-demand") digitization to flow to the Lab instead of being done by Special Collections.

**Progress on Goal 2: Implement a Digital Preservation Strategy**

Digital preservation means ensuring the long-term survival and accessibility of the Library’s digital collections. We have taken some first, important steps towards digital preservation, although we still have far to go. The Committee agreed to adopt the NDSA Levels of Preservation as a guide.
In terms of storage and backups, we have worked with ITS to set up a secure server, and all our digitized content has been moved off hard drives to the server. Content hosted on Digital Commons is secure, and we are currently moving most other content to Shared Shelf which complies with NDSA Level 1 Preservation.

Capturing and maintaining accurate metadata is also an important piece of digital preservation, and we are making improvements in this area as well. For content hosted on Digital Commons, Greenstone, or Shared Shelf, we have descriptive metadata. There is also some content hosted on the server but not loaded into any of these three systems. Earlier this year, one of the Digital Initiatives student workers created an inventory of this content in spreadsheet format. This content and metadata will eventually be transferred to Shared Shelf.

**Progress on Goal 3: Ensure Seamless Access to Content**

The Committee recognized that, in addition to our institutional repository Digital Commons, we needed a media management system capable of hosting our thousands of digital images, audio, and video files. After exploring two main possibilities—Lyrasis Repository Services vs. Shared Shelf by ArtStor—we chose Shared Shelf as the better fit for our needs. Shared Shelf is an entirely cloud-based media management system that allows subscribers to upload and catalog content, publishing it either to ArtStor or to the publicly accessible Shared Shelf Commons.

We plan to transfer all our digital collections that can be made publicly accessible to Shared Shelf Commons. Recently, we set up our first collection, *University Archives Photographs*, that will house at least 1200 digitized archival images. We worked with Shared Shelf to set up our custom metadata fields for this collection. Thus far, about 700 of these photos have been batch uploaded into the system along with their metadata from the Greenstone Database. A PFE student is doing additional cataloging, adding information such as campus location and links back to the original finding aids. Over the course of the summer and fall, we will be creating more Shared Shelf collections and publishing them to the web.

**Summary**

The Committee on Digital Initiatives has served to bring together constituents from different parts of the Library to create a coherent vision and action plan for our digital collections. We have made real progress in the past year and a half by developing a Strategic Plan taking action on the first three goals. In the following year, we will continue to make progress on these goals, particularly developing a real digital preservation strategy. And we will begin turning our attention towards supporting born-digital content.