Planning Digital Libraries: Definitions and Decisions

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What is a “digital library?”

A total environment, more than a subset of materials:

• Curated collections
• Organized and interoperable resources
• Specific purpose or audience
• User services
• Business operations
• Sustainability
Choosing Digital Collections

• Subjects covered at the institution

• Academic level of the work:
  – Introductory
  – Comprehensive
  – Advanced research

• Resources available
  – Budget, staff, technology
  – Relationships with partner institutions
Digital Coverage of Subjects

• Coverage of core journals
• Availability of ebooks for current and/or retrospective monographs
• Need for film, music, media, interactive modelling or mapping tools: specialized equipment and expertise
• Peer-reviewed content vs. quick information
• Course material developed locally vs. texts ordered from publishers
Print or Digital or Both?

- Completeness, quality and reliability of the digital version
- Print backfiles and “last copy” agreements
- Digital back-up
- Ability to use digital for lending and reserves
- Institutional importance of the specific topic
- Amount of climate-controlled shelf space
- Delivery mechanisms for rapid access
Acquiring Digital Content

• New materials from commercial publishers
• High-quality resources posted free via the Internet
• Projects digitizing segments of library holdings
• “Mass digitizing” from library collections
• Local content: faculty lecture notes, course readings, dissertations, administrative materials, photographs
• Cooperative agreements and regional networks
• Balancing costs, access, and usage rights
Digital Tools for Academic Users

- Citation and bibliographic software
- File management and indexing
- Text and data mining (searching)
- Geographic information systems (GIS) and statistical analysis
- Image zoom and transformation
Digital Library Services

- Search physical and digital books, journals, databases, and digital collections
- Class reserves: texts, images, music, and film
- Digitizing consultation and technical assistance
- Online reference, circulation, delivery, instruction
- Library interaction through social media
- Remote access from home, office, or distance
- Institutional repository and data management
Infrastructure for Library Operations

• Networks and devices for staff and users
• Business and personnel operations conducted online
• Integrated library systems managing physical and digital objects
• Technology spaces: information commons, media labs, smart classrooms, video conferencing, visualization walls, wireless
• Software development team
• Systems support for desktop and applications
• Long-term archiving of digital information
• Assessment and metrics
Digital Library Costs

• Acquisition of materials
• Space for staff and technical operations
• Staff salaries and training: technical and programming skills
• Types of user devices to be supported
• User services: reproductions, reformatting, images
• Vendor services: software, maintenance, storage
• Servers, workstations and peripheral hardware
Phasing and Strategic Planning

• Align with academic priorities
• Gradual but regular increases in operational readiness and technological capacity
• Assess institutional infrastructure and services
• Use special opportunities through partnerships, fundraising and grants