

# Digital Content Guidelines: Selection Criteria for Digital Objects

Office of Digital Collections  
University of Maryland Libraries

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## **Introduction**

The Office of Digital Collections provides access to digitized materials in a variety of formats from the collections of the University of Maryland Libraries in support of the research and teaching missions of the University. To this end, the University of Maryland Libraries maintains a digital repository built on the Fedora architecture, Digital Collections at the University of Maryland. This document will address selection criteria for digital objects under consideration to be included in Digital Collections at the University of Maryland. It supersedes the [Digital Content Guidelines](#) published in 2008.

Digital Collections at the University of Maryland serves a dual purpose:

- Providing public access to digital surrogates.
- Serving as a content management system for digital surrogates for the use of University of Maryland Libraries' faculty and staff.

Digital Collections promotes providing public access to digital surrogates whenever possible, thus the majority of digitized images are publicly available. Under limited circumstances, items which cannot be made publicly accessible, for instance because of copyright restrictions, will be included in the digital repository but marked as "Private," and only visible to staff

## **Digital Projects**

Comprehensive digital projects are considered on a case-by-case basis and analyzed taking into account history, feasibility, and current technological capabilities. The Office of Digital Collections will work with University of Maryland Libraries' staff to determine the most appropriate course of action for any proposed digital project. A "digital project" could be as complex as digitizing a large body of materials and designing new interfaces for access or a digital project may be as simple as digitization of a concentrated subject area, for example "The Civil War in Maryland."

The Office of Digital Collections maintains a list of proposed digital projects. To discuss details regarding any digital project ideas, large and small, please contact the Office of Digital Collections.

## **On-demand Digitization**

In addition to ongoing digitization projects, the Office of Digital Collections staff regularly performs "on-demand" digitization for the patrons, faculty, and staff of the University of Maryland Libraries. Requests are made for a variety of reasons, including research needs, exhibits, or publication. Most of on-demand digitization requests are fulfilled as part of the normal workflow in the Digitization Center at Hornbake

Library. Selected digital surrogates are added to Digital Collections at the University of Maryland, along with descriptive and administrative metadata and are permanently retained.

### **Selection Criteria**

The decision to include a digital object in Digital Collections at the University of Maryland ultimately rests with the University of Maryland Libraries staff member responsible for the original item. Staff should take into consideration the following criteria when making this decision:

- *Copyright:* Does the University of Maryland Libraries have the proper permissions to provide online access? If the item is in the [public domain](#), the copyright is owned by the University of Maryland, or permission has been granted by the copyright holder, the Office of Digital Collections can provide online access.
- *Physical condition:* For items in poor physical condition, it may be preferable to digitize the item only once to reduce the likeliness of wear and tear on the original. Patrons may access the digital surrogate in place of the original.
- *Future needs:* Has the same item been requested for digitization multiple times, or is it expected to be requested in the future?
- *Uniqueness:* Is the item unique to the University of Maryland? Is it unique within Digital Collections at the University of Maryland? The same item or similar item should not already exist within a local or other digital repository. Note: remember to consider University of Maryland items hosted at the Internet Archive, including the yearbook.
- *Completeness:* Is the item part of a larger whole? For instance, a book cover or single page from a book is not a complete item. Consider digitizing an entire book or an entire folder at the time of the initial item request, as providing this context may assist future researchers.
- *Thematic coherence:* Will the item complement or add value to existing digital collections? The Office of Digital Collections aims to shape a coherent online view of the Libraries' collections.

Other factors to consider:

- *Digitization workload:* The metadata creation required for objects in Digital Collections at the University of Maryland adds to the time required to fill a request for digitization. Items not selected for retention can be digitized quickly on-demand.
- *Digital storage:* Items selected for permanent inclusion in Digital Collections at the University of Maryland are expected to be retained into perpetuity.

### **Conclusion**

The selection criteria are intended to give University of Maryland Libraries' staff a flexible framework with which to make decisions regarding the retention of digital surrogates of items from their physical collections. An item that does not meet all of the criteria is not necessarily ineligible to be retained. For instance, a fragile item that is likely to be requested often may be retained even if the Libraries do not have permissions from the rights holder to provide public access to the digital surrogates online.

University of Maryland Libraries' staff members should indicate whether or not digital surrogates will be included in Digital Collections at the University of Maryland at the time of the digitization request. In order to maintain effective and efficient workflows in the Digitization Center, digitization requests will not be processed until a decision about retention is made.