Collection Development Policy for digitized archival and special collections material

adopted: December 5th, 2019

Mission Statement

The development of digital collections reflects the Library's and the College's missions to expand the realm of knowledge at the highest level by our work to "describe, arrange, and digitize our collections for all who seek what they contain" and to "acquire and preserve artifacts and information essential to our college and the world at large." Collecting activities focus on content that can be freely shared with as wide an audience as possible.

Scope & Context

Amherst College Digital Collections' focus is unique content from the Archives & Special Collections in the Library or the College at large. We prioritize material that will support the curriculum of the College and have a high impact both on campus and broadly in the world. In principle, we only digitize materials that have been transferred to Archives & Special Collections, though we reserve the right to make exceptions if warranted.

The Digital Programs department, in collaboration with the Digital Programs Group, is responsible for the selection, creation, delivery, and preservation of the Library's digital collections. The development and management of digital collections involves project management and strategic planning; metadata creation and management; the development and use of systems to create, manage, preserve, and deliver digital content; and the ongoing assessment of digital collections and services. The Digital Programs department partners with staff in other departments in the Library, the College, and with external institutions and organizations as appropriate. We follow well-documented policies and procedures for our digitization projects and adhere to national and international community-based standards and best practices in all our work.

Everything that is ingested into ACDC is be described using high quality, standards-driven metadata. Rich metadata is essential to enable end-user discovery, understanding, and use of

the materials. Standards-based, consistent, and accurate metadata supports long-term curation and preservation of digital content. It also facilitates interoperability, allowing content to be more easily shared with other discovery services, further expanding the visibility and discoverability of that content. High quality metadata is the underpinning of discovery systems designed to optimize searching, browsing, retrieval, and re-use of our unique and rare content.

Types of Collection Building

Digitization activities resulting in additions to ACDC, which include reformatting/imaging and metadata creation:
- Ongoing digitization of entire collections or defined portions of collections with the intention of ingest in to ACDC. Ongoing digitization is done by Digital Programs staff and student workers. These projects are generally not subject to outside deadlines, but we will assign project timelines.
- Specially-funded digitization projects made possible through grants or gifts. These may involve additional short-term staff and will likely be subject to specific deadlines and special project parameters. Collections produced from these projects will be ingested into ACDC.

Single-purpose digitization by request:
- Digitization based on user requests of materials that are rare or unique, fit the selection criteria, and receive regular use. This includes material requested by researchers in the archives, by faculty for teaching purposes, and by users through Interlibrary Loan. Although single-purpose digitization is necessary, it is not the focus of our digital collection development.

Maintenance and Removal

This policy is designed in part to ensure the development of digital collections that are of high quality, useful and usable, and cohesive. It is possible, however, that individual objects or entire collections may need to be removed or deaccessioned for reasons of collection weeding, storage, or copyright dispute, among others. These decisions are made in conjunction with the Digital Programs Group and others as appropriate. We will, as needed, update metadata and other contents, keeping in mind preservation concerns, age of a collection, and evolving standards of practice.

Selection Criteria

Materials must first be deposited into Archives and Special Collections and processed before being considered for digitization and inclusion in ACDC. Amherst College Digital Collections is not a replacement for Archives & Special Collections, but provides new modes of access for materials stewarded by that department.

Mission and significance

Amherst College Digital Collections (ACDC) provides digital access to high quality images and other formats of selected materials from the college's archives and special collections. The significance of content is a subjective judgment, and requires evaluating a number of factors. We will consider these questions:

- Is the collection relevant to College-wide initiatives or events?
- Would digitizing the collection support specific teaching, courses, or faculty research on campus?
- Are there communities of interest who would value having digital access to the materials?
- How are the materials currently used? What impact might digitization have on use?
- Do the materials complement existing digital content?
- Would the materials broaden the subject areas or types of materials in ACDC?
- Will digitization of the materials enhance their intellectual value?
- Will the materials support student learning and research activities?
- Would the materials surface the perspective of groups currently underrepresented in the existing digital collection?
- Would digitizing the collection surface traditionally underrepresented voices?

Use and Outreach

Digital access would enhance value and usability to users. We will consider these questions:

- Do Archives usage statistics demonstrate a demand for improved access?
- Would the collection enhance public awareness of the Archives' collecting strengths if digitized and described at a more granular level?
- Would digitization of this collection enhance discovery, access, and use?
- Does the collection contribute to or enhance existing digital collections at Amherst College or elsewhere?
- Is the demand by communities of interest high for this collection?
- Is the material to be digitized openly available elsewhere in digital form? We will only consider digitizing material available elsewhere if doing so will add significant value

- Would digitization co-locate materials that are physically or intellectually dispersed?
- Can we adequately represent the collection's context in ACDC?

Preservation

Physical condition or current access of the originals limit use.
- Would digitization alleviate any preservation concerns?
- Would digitization of the materials damage them?
- Would digitization increase access to materials that are restricted for use because of preservation concerns?

Rights, Privacy, and Sensitive Information

We provide unrestricted access to materials whenever possible, but the research value and significance of some materials warrants their inclusion even if they have restrictions on use.

Most material considered for digitization will fall into one of the following categories:
- Works in the public domain
- Works under a valid open access or Creative Commons license
- Works for which Amherst College holds the copyright
- Works for which we have obtained permission to digitize and make available
- Works that we can make available through fair use

We may also digitize materials determined to be Orphan Works, i.e., works for which the copyright holder cannot be located. Rarely, we may digitize works known to be under copyright under the Fair Use protections of the Copyright Act.

Selection considerations:
- Are privacy issues pervasive throughout the collection?
- Are there concerns about putting indigenous knowledge out to the public?
- Is extra care and attention required to describe the collection with sensitivity and empathy (e.g. if the collection contains offensive material such as minstrel shows)?
- Are copyright restrictions pervasive throughout the collection?
- Would copyright restrictions prevent digitization of some or all of the collection?
  - Would partially digitizing the collection or redacting copyrighted material impact the usability, understanding, and context of the digitized item and collection?

Considerations for resource capacity

Labor

- What is the total amount of material to be digitized?
- To what level is the collection arranged and described? How many additional archival processing hours would be necessary before digitization?
- How much preparation of the collection is needed to ready it for digitization?
- What level of metadata description is needed? Is the nature of the material such that describing some or all of it will be especially difficult or time-consuming?
- How complex will the research and analysis of the rights status of material be?
- Is sufficient funding available for either an outside vendor or additional staff hours (if needed)?
- Is sufficient and appropriate staffing available for imaging of materials?

Time

- Is there a timeline requirement for the project?
- How does the general timeframe for the project relate to other projects already in progress?

Technical Requirements/Digitization

- What formats of material comprise the collection?
  - Would any of these formats prove difficult to photograph?
- What are the kinds of technical equipment required for digitization?
- Would the condition of the material hinder handling during photography?

Technical Requirements/Delivery

- Are there formats that would require functionality not currently available in ACDC, e.g. audio or video?
- Would any material benefit from functionality not currently available in ACDC, e.g. crowd-sourced transcription or tagging, TEI, etc.?

Technical Requirements/Infrastructure

- Managing who has access to materials (embargos, campus restrictions, other file restrictions, high resolution images, etc.)

- Storage capacity: do we have adequate disk space to steward the file types and metadata for collections?
- Can the system support the file type that can be generated? In the form of displaying files, or ability to download, or both?
- Is there an established preferred preservation file master type for the objects? (ex: 3D images)

Archival Arrangement and Description

- Adequate processing of archival collections is a necessary first step in digitization, and has an impact on whether or not collections can be digitized. Archives and manuscript materials must be processed and have a finding aid, and books must have a catalog record. The state of archival metadata should be a significant factor in how our digital collections are developed.

Funding Sources and Resource Allocation

- Donors and grant-making agencies may stipulate funding priorities that impact digitization. Matching high-priority materials to appropriate funding sources is crucial.
- Consider projects in conjunction with other priorities of Library and Digital Programs Group.
- Is there adequate funding for digitization and for ongoing stewardship of digital materials?

Limitations

Materials that meet the selection criteria may not be digitized if they:
- Cannot be shared without violating copyright law.
- Are duplicative of material digitized elsewhere, so long as they are broadly accessible.
- Do not comprise a complete work. (e.g., a single page from a book)
- Cannot be shared due to privacy concerns or may contain indigenous knowledge that is not intended for the general public.
- There may be times when we start a project, and then realize part way through that we need to change the scope or extent of the project, or even cease the digitization of that collection.