

The Colorado Digitization Project



A new Collaborative: The Colorado Digitization Project (CDP) will extend existing collaborative work undertaken by the Colorado library communities into new areas, involving museums, archives, and historical societies. The CDP is a collaborative planning and project development effort designed to increase participation in digitization efforts and to expand access to special collections in digital format. To develop the plan for this collaborative, a project an LSTA funded project, "Beyond Citations: Creating a Digital Library for Colorado" was submitted by Nancy Allen (Dean and Director of the Penrose Library at the University of Denver) and Nancy Bolt (Assistant Commissioner, Colorado Department of Education and State Librarian). A planning grant of \$71,000 was awarded to the State Library for the 1998-1999 year.

The purpose of the project: to work collaboratively to bring together, from all corners of the state, digitized material that will

- ensure public access to the rich resources of Colorado,
- promote the economic and efficient delivery of full text and graphical resources to the people of Colorado,
- contribute to the national effort to develop digital libraries,
- to create an open, distributed, publicly accessible digital collection,
- to establish a collaborative structure among the state's libraries, museums, archives, and historical societies to coordinate and guide the development of the digital collections,
- to establish criteria and standards to guide the selection of material for inclusion,
- to assist organizations in digitizing and creating access to material by finding common practices and creating guidelines,
- to demonstrate how digital material can benefit high school students and teachers working to meet the Colorado history standards.

The project is a long-term endeavor, with complex technical and policy elements.

The first year's goals are focusing on creating the collaborate effort among all types of collection-oriented organizations, develop a plan to create a digital collection, inventory the current digitization initiatives, develop guidelines to assure interoperability and to complete a pilot project.

Liz Bishoff, formerly of OCLC, has been named project director. A steering committee composed of museum and library members to establish policy. An advisory group with representatives from a regional library system director, Colorado State Library staff, The Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries, the ACLIN project, the National Cable Television Center and Museum, the University of Denver Library and Information Services program, the Denver Museum of Natural History, the Colorado State Archives, a school district, the Boulder Public Library, the Denver Public Library, the University of Colorado at Boulder, the University of Denver Penrose Library, and the Denver Art Museum. was established as the fastest way to work on developing a collaborative effort among a very wide range of organizations interested in digitization. While it is expected that other partners interested in being involved in the Advisory Board will join the project.

Needed: Education! In order to begin the education process on digitization, all Board members were invited to participate in the two- day conference hosted by the Council of Western State Libraries on planning statewide digitization projects. Participants heard from the Digital Library Federation, funding agencies such as the Institute of Museum and Library Services, leading organizations such as the Getty and the Research Libraries Group, and from technical experts such as Roy Tennant and Howard Besser, both from University of California, Berkeley.

Throughout the duration of the project, the steering committee and the project director have made special efforts to become aware of the major digitization projects underway in North America. Best practices being developed by the library and museum communities are being translated into action plans in Colorado through the CDP.

The Working Groups: The Project Manager has established a series of working groups to develop practical, immediate solutions to issues such as metadata, scanning, and collection development.

The Metadata Working Group brings representatives from libraries and museums together to develop an approach to creating descriptions of digital objects that could be supported by the various types of organizations. The working group has reviewed the various approaches to the description of digital resources including the use of Dublin Core, VRA, GILS, EAD and MARC cataloging. Among the current digitization projects a variety of approaches are being taken to the description of digital resources. Providing access to these collections with

different approaches to description is a key issue for the project. One very clear problem is that while leading research institutions or very large public libraries or museums may be informed about new descriptive practices such as the Dublin Core, Colorado libraries, archives, and museums are not engaged in those practices and need to be better informed about the options.

The Collection Development group is working to gain a better understanding of what collections and partnerships might be feasible to include in the collaborative. This group is being informed by a CDP survey conducted by Liz Bishoff this fall. The survey results are enlightening. Of approximately 300 Colorado archives, historical societies, libraries and museums who received a survey form, a total of 57 surveys were returned, a 19% return rate. Of those returned, eleven institutions have current digitization projects underway, and 15 institutions are planning for digitization initiatives in the next two years. Eight museums, 12 libraries, 6 archives and one historical society have current projects underway. Four of these projects were identified through means other than the survey. The respondents are digitizing, or planning to digitize, a variety of formats. 52% are working with photographs, 20% with text. 10% are including works of art in varying formats in their digitization efforts. Video, audio and music score digitization are being undertaken by one institution each. Key issues being addressed by this group include the scope of the collection, the audience for a statewide collection, and how to assist local institutions in determining what collections should be digitized. The Scanning Working Group is examining issues related to the technical standards which might be recommended to project participants. The group is considering matters such as equipment, resolution, outsourcing options, image file formats, and color quality.

Additionally, the project has a working group of museum representatives. This group is looking at the specific issues faced by museums and historical societies, including application of the guidelines developed for metadata and scanning, copyright and security.

The Website: The Website working group has developed a site (<http://coloradodigital.coalliance.org/>) that aggregates current digitization projects, provides information on the project, and a toolkit on digitization for the practitioner. The website enables users to browse the digital collections by media format, geographic location, as well as providing an overview of all Colorado current and planned digitization projects.

While linking to digitization projects is a helpful service, the metadata task force is recommending that with future funding, the project work toward creation of a global catalog of metadata linked to the images, enhancing retrieval. In this way, teachers, students, and other Colorado residents will be able to do a single search rather than having to click on multiple institutional websites to explore and discover digital resources.

The issues remaining are complex, and the partnerships intriguing, but with dynamic organizations interested in digitization in a collaborative environment, information consumers will benefit. For additional information about the Colorado Digitization Project, visit the website or contact the Project Manager, Liz Bishoff at (<http://coloradodigital.coalition.org/>) or send e-mail to <bishoffl@concentric.net>