

The Research Libraries Group Digital Collections Project

Studies in Scarlet: *Marriage and Sexuality in the United States and the United Kingdom 1815-1914**

Studies in Scarlet is RLG's first digital collections project which will test the proposition that "virtual" collections for scholarly research can be created collaboratively, made widely available, and be responsibly maintained into the future for continued use.

The project idea came from RLG members and advisory groups and shaped by two RLG member task forces: the Content Task Force selected the collection theme, with advice and input from several legal scholars and historians; it will guide user evaluation of the new collection when it is built. The Technical Task Force advises the project participants and will take part in investigating and implementing long-term aspects of the collection.

Seven RLG member institutions (Harvard University Law Library, New York Public Library, New York University Law Library, North Carolina State Archives, Princeton University, the University of Leeds and the University of Pennsylvania Law Library) are selected to participate in the project. They contribute materials to the collection and, under the guidance and coordination of RLG staff, will build the collection and assess its usefulness to scholars. During the two years of the project, they will digitize materials, create RLIN records, browse lists and other finding tools, examine navigational options, design user survey instruments, and implement agreed-upon practices and procedures.

The resulting project collection will contain over 350,000 images, many also in ASCII and SGML-encoded searchable text, all are accessible through multiple channels and may be linked to other relevant resources. It will be the only digital collection of its kind -- a comprehensive collection on the legal regulation and social perception of family and domestic relationships in nineteenth-century America and England. It will also be a living collection -- new and relevant materials

may be added readily utilizing the collection development guidelines and server structure already in place.

Another equally important project outcome will be the establishment of standards and best practices in creating and maintaining digital collections that may be shared with any institution wishing to create digital collections of its own. From drafting an RFP and negotiating digitizing contracts, designing a collection framework and access points, implementing naming and linking strategies, to constructing collection browse lists, project participants have already gained valuable working knowledge that can be applied to other digital projects they become engaged.

The supporting infrastructure for the digital collection is the focus of the RLG archival server and testbed project: ARCHES.

* Studies in Scarlet was the lead article in the Spring 1996 issue of the RLG News, available at the RLG web site:<http://www.rlg.org/rlgnews/news40.html>.