



DIGITIZATION PROJECT DECISION-MAKING: SHOULD WE DIGITIZE, CAN WE DIGITIZE?

Establishing a **Digitization Purpose Statement** and **Digitization Policy** for your institution or department will provide an overall framework and guidelines for institutional, departmental, and program-based digitization work. Once established these documents will make it easier to define project-specific digitization work, design workflows for digitization projects, create quality control steps, and define sustainability parameters.

Once you have a digitization project in mind there are two main sets of questions to ask: **Should we digitize?** and **Can we digitize?** Asking if your department or institution should digitize helps define the overall goals, scope, outcomes and benefits of a project. Asking if your department or institution should digitize aids in defining the specific needs of a project in terms of resources, technology and support. The steps below are meant to guide your decision making about embarking on a digitization project.

Should We Digitize?

Goals, Scope, Outcomes, and Benefits

Begin by defining your overall project goals and decision-making strategy. Does the project fit within your broader mission and organizational goals? What outcomes and benefits will result from the project? Can your institution sustain the end results of the digitization project? As you go through the steps below answer the questions on a separate sheet of paper.

Step One

Define your project goals

- What is the main purpose of the project?
 - Are their specific steps to achieving the main goal? These can be defined as sub goals.
- What are the boundaries of the project?
 - Are there time, budget or resource constraints that define the parameters?
 - Are their cultural needs or values that define the boundaries?
 - Who are the decision makers and what are the parameters of each person's role within the project?
- Are there grant-funded mandates your project must meet? (these might be time limits, preservation guidelines, report deadlines, etc.)

Step Two

Define your project scope

- How does the project fit within the mission/scope of the Tribe/department/institution?
 - Does the project align with your overall digitization mission and goals?
 - Does the project directly support research or instruction?
 - Is there a preservation need?
 - Does the project support tribal or community goals?
 - Have any community needs assessments been done to define goals/needs in relation to digitization?
 - Are there educational goals?
- What are the boundaries of the project in relation to the materials?
 - For example, is this project only about digitizing language materials? Or is the project limited to only photographs?
 - Who will decide what falls within the scope of your project?
 - Are there any institutional guidelines or approvals you must get in order to define the project?
 - Are there grant-funded mandates you must adhere to in relation to materials? Some grants only allow for certain types of materials or certain project areas (oral histories, language, curriculum, etc.)
- Is there a clearly define amount material to be digitized?
 - It is crucial to have a sense of the amount of materials so that you can determine timelines, resource needs and if necessary limit the scope to a portion of the materials or plan for a phased project (Phase one, two etc.)
- How will you describe and provide access to the items?

Step Three

Define your expected outcomes

- What are the desired results from this project?
 - Are there specific targets for numbers of materials digitized, metadata created, or community engagement?
 - Will the materials be added to an existing collection to enrich it or is this a stand-alone project/collection?
 - Are there outcomes related to access, outreach, and communication with the tribe, the public, or other stakeholders?
- How will you measure your outcomes? Think about different measurements for both qualitative and quantitative outcomes

- Do you have assessment materials in place? If not:
 - Create evaluation forms for activities or user testing (for example: surveys that assess the needs in your community, evaluations for users to fill out after a community event or exhibit, feedback forms after using a digital collection, etc.
 - Use statistics from reference requests and internet traffic (for example: documenting when your staff helps users with reference questions, or using a tool like Google Analytics to track visitors to a website with digital collections)

Step Four

Define expected benefits

- What do you want to gain from the project?
 - For example: increasing the scope of your collections, creating language materials for k-12 students, preserving oral histories from elders, documentation of tribal histories, etc.
- Are there both quantitative and qualitative benefits?
 - For example: a set number of documents scanned (quantitative) and increased tribal knowledge about a certain subject (qualitative)

Step Five

Plan for sustainability and preservation – both physical and digital

- Will digitization permanently damage the physical materials?
 - Survey materials before digitization to make sure they will not be damaged during digitization
 - If damage may occur, identify alternate methods for digitization, or do not digitize
- Will the digital content you create be saved for long-term digital preservation?
 - For example: for the next 5, 10, or 15 years, will you and your department able to continue the storage, management, description, and access to digital files to make them usable?
- Do you have Information Technology support?
 - For example: an IT department, individual, or contracted service who supports use of technology, storage of files, software, and hardware.
 - Have you discussed existing preservation workflows with your IT department? For example: How often do they make backup copies? Is this an automated process? Do you need to put in specific requests? How will you be able to access preservation master files?

- Do you have a digital preservation plan in place?
 - Is your content backed up on a regular basis?
 - Do you have your content saved on reliable storage media, and a system of backups?
 - The **3-2-1 Rule** is a good baseline: three copies, saved on two different media formats, at least one copy backed up off site. For example, three copies created, save one on local computer, one to an external hard drive, and one to cloud storage (which is the off-site copy saved in case of a disaster.)
 - Do you have a way to check the integrity of files as they are created and stored?

Once you've answered the **should we digitize** question and you decide to move on, you'll need to decide if you **can** digitize. Do you have the resources, time, technology and support to undertake the digitization project? Examine the section below to determine the feasibility of carrying out a digitization project.

Can We Digitize?

Resources, Technology, Support

Answering the questions below will allow you to see if you have the necessary staff, time, equipment, resources, community support, and cultural and legal permissions to carry out a digitization project at this time. These questions will help you establish what you need in place before starting a digitization project and what you need to complete the project. This is also a good list to help you define what you may need for future projects. As you go through the steps below answer the questions on a separate sheet of paper.

Step One

Define the timeline for the project

- How long will the project take?
 - Generally one-third of time will be spent on planning and administrative tasks, one-third on digital capture, and one-third on metadata
 - Start with the main goal (one year) then break each down the main time line with specific target goals
 - For example, months 1-2 creating metadata standards, months 3-6 digitizing, months 7-8 quality control, etc. Some tasks will overlap
- What deadlines do you need to follow?
 - Are there external deadlines?
 - Are there upcoming events for which the materials are needed?
 - Are there departmental or institutional deadlines?

- Who will be the project manager, or the person in charge of making sure the project is carried out? This person or people must keep staff on target and provide oversight and guidance.
- What periodic goals will you set to keep the project on target?
 - Goals may include:
 - numbers of materials digitized
 - metadata created
 - a defined number of community input sessions
 - Keep track of progress by setting up:
 - Weekly meetings
 - Monthly project assessments

Step Two

Determine the staff needed to ensure the project is completed

- What staff resources are available?
 - Permanent staff, temporary workers, students, volunteers, contract workers
- Who will be overseeing and carrying out the work of digitization, metadata creation, and quality checks?
- Will any staff need training?
- If staff resources are not available within your organization, you may want to consider outsourcing the work to an outside vendor.

Step Three

Determine the budget needed to ensure the project is completed

- Gather information and create a list of any costs that may be involved in the digitization project. Costs may include:
 - Staff: Permanent staff time, temporary/contract employees, consultants, staff training or professional development
 - Equipment or supplies: Any hardware, software, supplies, furniture, etc. for the digitization process
 - Preservation/conservation costs: Any costs needed for storing and preserving digital files, preserving physical items during and after digitization, and addressing any preservation or conservation that are discovered
 - Outsourcing costs: If using a vendor for digitization, conservation, metadata, etc.
 - Public programming or outreach: Any costs of events, supplies, honorariums for elders

- Determine what funding sources are available for the project.
 - Will you be able to secure funding from your department or tribe?
 - Will you need to engage in fundraising efforts or apply for grants?

Step Four

Determine your equipment and software needs

- List any digitization equipment or technology you will need for the project.
 - Make sure to take into account all steps of the project, this list may include hardware and software
- Assess what technology is available already and what needs to be purchased
 - Start with what you currently have and then list what you may need to purchase. For example: list all technology that you currently have (Microsoft Office, Adobe Photoshop, office computer) and list all equipment that you might need (professional scanner, second computer and monitor)
 - Does any equipment need repairs? If not, do you have a list of vendors if you do need repairs later?
 - List associated costs for equipment, technology and software
- If equipment or technology resources are not available within your organization, you can consider outsourcing to an outside vendor, balancing factors like cost, time, and accountability
 - Sometimes outsourcing a project for digitization can be less expensive when you take into account equipment purchasing and maintenance, staff time, and training
 - However, sometimes the project might have sensitive content or cultural significance that is best handled in-house

Step Five

Examine your physical space

Depending on the type of project, a separate physical space for carrying out digitization work is helpful.

- List space needs
 - Space for a computer (or multiple computers) for capture and editing
 - Space for digitization equipment
 - Space to lay out and store physical materials if needed
 - Do you need a quiet space for audio editing work?

Step Six

Examine your digital storage capabilities

Do you have enough storage space to save high quality archival master files and access copies for all material included in the project?

- Ideally, storage will be part of a digital preservation plan for your institution
- However, you may not have a digital preservation plan in place, or existing storage will not be adequate and will need to be expanded
- List any storage hardware you will need to store the digital files that are created during this project, if not already provided for by your department's digital preservation plan
 - For example: listing the need to purchase a server, external hard drives, or a cloud hosting service
 - Determine the approximate space that you will need (in gigabytes or terabytes), research storage options – these steps will be important for creating a budget proposal
- Discuss your digital storage needs for the project with the relevant staff
 - Communicate with an IT department, administration, or other departments

Step Seven

Establish permissions and access parameters for the digitized materials

- Do you have the legal rights to digitize and share all the materials or information included in the project?
 - Find paperwork such as the Deed of Gift for the collection
 - Survey the collection for any materials that might belong to another person, group, or institution
- Consider legal, social, and cultural questions.
 - Are there copyright concerns with the materials? If you don't know, do you have legal counsel to guide you?
 - Are there individual or community privacy concerns? If you are not sure do you have a tribal committee, elders' council or other governing body to discuss the issues with?
 - Are there cultural concerns? Are any of the materials sacred? Do they belong to specific families?
 - What are the levels of access associated with the materials? For example, are some recordings meant for elders only? Are some documents meant for Tribal Council members only?

Step Eight

Define how access will be provided during and after digitization

Providing appropriate access to digital collections requires a combination of technology, policies, and documents to support access for different user groups.

- What policies and documents will you need to support and define access?
 - Do the general public and/or community members have differing access parameters?
- Do you have a set of procedures and guidelines for staff as they work?

- How will staff access project files? Are there any rules for confidentiality surrounding the materials they are digitizing?
- How will you provide access to your audiences during digitization?
 - Will the physical collection still be available for research during the project?
 - Will files be shared as they are digitized, in batches, or not until the whole collection is digitized?
 - Do you have written protocols or forms describing how to access collections, or how to request access? This might include requests to view the collection, requests for copies, or permission to re-use items in the digital collection
- What technology will you need to provide the desired level of access during and after digitization?
 - Do you have a content management system or sharing platform? Does your content management system allow differing levels of access?
 - Do you have a dedicated workstation to provide on-site access?
 - Do you have an online platform, such as Dropbox.com or Box.com, for sharing large media files on request? Or will you be using storage devices for file transfer?
 - Do you plan to share content via email?