The charge of the CUARL Digital Initiatives Committee is to “formulate a method of providing optimum access to each member library's unique collections.” The Digital Initiatives Committee interprets this charge to mean that titles already digitized and available commercially are not covered by this charge, nor are files to be used as a data repository to satisfy Federal or other research funding requirements.

So, to fulfill this charge, the committee must:

• identify unique collections from each UA campus to be considered for digitization,
• develop common standards of metadata, and
• create a shared preservation plan for unique materials.

All this must be done in a spirit of collaboration and shared access, but with an appreciation of the special circumstances and individual needs and desires of each separate library within the UA system.

STATUS REPORT

At the first meeting of this committee on December 12, 2006, the following individuals met at UAMS, as part of a larger meeting of CUARL:

• Cheryl Conway, UAF
• Donna Rose, UALR
• Amanda Saar, UAMS
• Mary Heady, UAM
• Carolyn Filippelli (UAFS)

As part of the later general meeting, Donna Rose and Amanda Saar agreed to be co-chairs, and Mary Heady was later selected to be recorder. The Committee is also making use of the Sharepoint site setup for CUARL.

Either before or during the separate subcommittee meeting, each library representative presented report of the digitizing situation at their institution. Each report covered equipment, software and projects in progress. To summarize: each library has basic scanning equipment and staff, but at various level of sophistication.

In addition, each member submitted a list of possible resources for digitization which sparked a discussion on the similarities and differences of our collections and possible digitization goals for the future.

The reports and discussion provided a springboard for a number of issues involved in starting a collaborative digitization process. Some of the issues included:

• data migration,
• privacy laws,
• metadata standards,
• overlap with other projects in the state,
• staff time,
implications for traditional archival storage, and
backups and
emergency management.

Funding and training issues were also discussed and committee co-chairs volunteered to further investigate options.

As a result of this initial meeting, it was agreed that a primary and overarching goal of the Digital Initiatives Committee is to come up with a cost effective, workable plan to ensure that all participants have the basic equipment and staffing available to contribute items of high quality to the project. To this end, an inventory list of scanning equipment and software available at each instruction was added to “Sharepoint” along with individual digitization “wish lists” for shared access and review. Equipment lists from other institutions was collected for further study by the committee.

The remainder of this report is a framework to support the committee’s mission, collaborative efforts, and future goals

REVIEWS OF LITERATURE:
Since the management of digital projects and initiatives is a relatively new endeavor for most libraries, any assumption of such a significant project will impact libraries’ budgets and organization, structures and staffing.

Before embarking on a collaborative project of this magnitude, it was decided that research and review of existing digitization projects and a study of management models was needed to develop a collective knowledge of best practices. After a reasonable review, the co-chairs, speaking for the committee, recommend that each library either purchase or interlibrary loan an ARL Spec Kit publication titled, "Managing Digitization Activities.” This work is based on a survey distributed to the 123 ARL member libraries in February 2006 and covers everything from mission statements to assessment studies. Working plans collected include the “ALA Digitization Planning Document” and the “University of Chicago Digitization Working Plan.”

METADATA
Two common metadata schemes, EAD and Dublin Core, were selected as options for digitalization and deserve further study. It may be that they can be used concurrently, but that information is not clear. Again, selection could be based on the amount of staff available. Apparently EAD is requires more hands-on staff time, while Dublin Core (as used by ContentDM) is more turn-key.

Training is widely available for each method and selection could be based on each library’s staffing, budget and technology expectations. The goal is to provide shared and accessible information throughout the state to unique collections. Templates specific to collections or formats could be made available for shared use via Sharepoint.
STAFFING

Who does what? UA System Libraries have different levels of staffing with different areas of expertise. How to allow for differences within libraries and also effectively collaborate within the UA system? Activities require contributions from many areas of the library from preservation to cataloging to administration. More study on staffing models is needed and how best to adapt the need for digitization to the system libraries collaborative and individual needs.

Who would coordinate activities between libraries and act as project manager? One suggestion is to hire a “Digitization Coordinator”, possibly grant supported, who would work with all involved libraries to help each achieve their individual goals in a way that would support each of the other member libraries. A competent, people oriented, library oriented individual in this type of position would be able to prevent “reinventing the wheel” while keeping all activities on course.

STORAGE AND BACK-UP

How will this information be managed, stored, and maintained? A quality product needs the right amount of storage, and a quality back-up system.

Once the needs are determined, the costs of storage can be assessed more easily. Although each library’s needs are special to that library, the possibility of shared storage must be considered. More research is needed, with the input of each library, to see what the options are. There are no cut and dried answers for this type of storage, and the committee’s concern is that any answer be open-ended, and cost effective.

As far as backup is concerned, one logical aspect is to work with the CUALR Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Planning group to determine criteria for storage and protection of digitized data, and work to follow that plan as the digitization needs of each library are satisfied.

FUNDING:

It would appear quite logical to begin this program with the assistance of grants, in order to determine the most efficient use of resources to achieve the stated goals. However, once each program is established, regular funding to continue its services, and supply appropriate upgrading as needed will be necessary. Such funding must be inserted into each library’s regular budget, and appropriate education on its importance shared with the proper administrators. It is possible that this type of activity might also attract donors more easily than just a general plea to “help the library.” The education on this type of library service could also possibly be aided by the services of the suggested “Digitization Coordinator.”

ASSISTANCE FROM PROFESSIONALS

AMIGOS already supplies training on much of the information needed for this type of project. However, the Society of American Archivists might also be able to supply information, as does ARL.

Once each library has a firm understanding and a knowledge of what it needs, it will know what to ask for, and the shared body of knowledge that the members of this committee are collecting will be available for use.
SUMMARY

To find out what would work best for each system library in an area as volatile as digitization requires that each library know what it wants, and also what it needs. All participants appear to be aware of that.

However, for this committee to create a “How to do it” manual for libraries so different would not serve the involved libraries well.

It is recommended that all interested libraries do the following:

- Read or buy a copy of the ARL Spec Kit
- Know what you want
- Know what you need to achieve what you want
- Work with the members of this committee to see what can be accomplished using initial grant funds, and the knowledge of people who are already doing something with digitization.

It is also recommended that grant funds be investigated to see if one dedicated position can be created to serve as a resource and clearinghouse to get everyone in the same basic position for digitization.

Submitted by:

Donna Rose and Amanda Saar, Co-Chairs;
Mary Heady, Recorder, and
Cheryl Conway and Carolyn Filippelli, very involved committee members.
March 6, 2007