

Project “ETQIL”

course

Digitizing Projects

Major assignment: Digitization Plan

Mats Dahlström, University of Borås

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Major assignment: Digitization Plan

The main assignment in the course is to design a project Plan for digitizing a specific source material with textual content. This material can range from a single document to a large collection in need of digitization, and the material can be housed by a particular library, e.g. at your workplace, or be a private collection (although the former is recommended). If you do not have a particular real collection in mind or access to it, it is possible to design the Plan for a fictive document or collection of documents.

As for selection of material and strategy, you can either focus on volume or on depth:

1. If you focus on *volume*, your Plan might e.g. concern a digitization of a large collection of objects, comprising several thousands of objects with some degree of internal variation with respect to e.g. size, type of binding, and condition of items.
2. If you focus on *depth*, your Plan might concern a "critical", high-quality digitization of a single or a few complex object(s), such as manuscripts or composite documents.

It is your responsibility to present trustworthy arguments of why the selected source collection needs the particular methods, process and project design that you argue for in your Plan.

To support you in writing the Plan, you might want to consult, firstly, Bülow & Ahmon (2011) or Terras (2008) or a similar overview of digitization processes, secondly, the guidelines and manuals referred to as suggestions at the end of module 1, and thirdly, the required and the recommended literature in the course modules as well as any additional literature you deem helpful for your particular project.

Form and size

The form and size of the Plan can vary considerably, depending on your interests and ambitions as well as on the characteristics of the source material, as long as the material to be digitized consists of textual content (books, manuscripts, letters,

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newspapers, journals, etc). The Plan can take on the form of e.g. a regular essay in a word processing format (such as MS Word or Open Office) of a few pages, or a spread sheet accompanied with explanatory text, or a slide presentation, or a presentation on the web; choose the method of delivery that you feel most comfortable with and would use if you were to propose a digitization project in front of your library's board of directors (or equivalent). Remember that the total amount of hours you are expected to spend on the Plan is ca 13, so do not overdo your work. Still, make sure the Plan contains what is required (see below) and that it is realistic and balanced with respect both to the material that is to be digitized and to the library (or other institution) that is to perform the proposed digitization. Thus, you need to base the Plan in the conditions, competences, resources and needs of a specific library. Do not write a utopian “dream plan” - any digitization project needs to compromise between what it would like to do (given limitless resources) and what the available resources allow for.

Contents

The Plan must reflect the three modules in the course. This means that at the minimum, it must consist of:

- a short description of the source material (total number of objects, media type(s), type of content, size, current placement, ownership, condition, formats, etc)
- a declaration of why this (selection of) material needs to be digitized, what the main purpose(s) of the project is
- a declaration of who or which institution is to perform the digitization
- a brief presentation of the strategy chosen: do you recommend an ambitious, high-quality, manual digitization process, or a quick-and-dirty machine-driven mass digitization strategy, or something in between?
- a brief walk-through of the proposed digitization process and its steps

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- a rough estimation of what resources the project needs in order to be realized, with respect to e.g. time, costs, human resources/staff, hardware (computers, cameras, scanners, cradles etc) and software, collection survey, licenses, rooms/studios/labs, competences and skills, clearing of copyright issues, metadata, etc. This does not need to be an extensive section, the important aspect here is for your Plan to come off as being realistic and doable, given the institution you have declared as performing the digitization
- a particular section on the planned text capture and text encoding phases within the project. Try to identify any particular problems the project is likely to come across due to the characteristics of the source material.
- a declaration of who the intended users are, why they need this particular material to be digitized, and how the project, the selection and the strategies and methods have been chosen to best suit the needs of this particular user group.
- an identification of possible risks during the project, identifying factors that might prove to have negative effect on the results of the digitization process.

Assessment

The Plan (or a link to the Plan) is submitted/made available through the platform to the other course participants. This is followed by a seminar, where your Digitization Plan is briefly presented by you and then discussed by the seminar. The trainer follows up by specifying strengths and weaknesses of the Plan and notifying whether or not it has passed. This is based on whether or not the Plan:

- is designed according to the instructions, and has at least the contents as specified above
- is comprehensibly and understandably presented
- displays realism and relevance with respect to the material chosen, the proposed motive for the project, the available resources, and the needs of the targeted user group(s)

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The Plan deserves *special merit* if:

- the criteria have been met on a high and critical level
- it has a reflective and problematizing approach, where you display a particular ability to identify possible technical or administrative risks and potential problems for the project to come true, and where you are able to propose good solutions to such problems.
- it contains concrete ideas about how the digitized collection could be evaluated, and its use measured
- there is a reflection on the long-term benefits of the proposed project - for users, for the institution, for the material itself, for other similar projects, etc

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