

DEVELOPING A DIGITISATION FRAMEWORK FOR YOUR ORGANISATION (FEEL THE FEAR AND DO IT ANYWAY)

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Introduction

This paper draws on my personal experiences as Digital Projects Librarian at the University of Auckland Library. Over the last 3 years I have developed a framework for digitisation activities. This paper discusses the elements of the framework, how it was developed and what we have learnt from this. I hope that you can use our knowledge and experiences to begin developing a framework for your own organisation. Although this can be an intimidating challenge it is something that all librarians and archivists will have to do sooner rather than later.

The Global Picture

Digitisation is taking place on a global scale. Large and small organisations around the world from many different sectors (museums, archives, libraries, art galleries, government and commercial) have been creating or converting resources into digital form for a wide range of users. Many of these projects have made significant contributions to preserving and increasing access to the cultural heritage of a nation by collaborations both nationally and internationally. Some notable examples are:

Picture Australia (by NLA and others) <http://www.pictureaustralia.org>
Artefacts Canada (by CHIN) http://www.chin.gc.ca/English/Artefacts_Canada/index.html
Image Canada (by NLC and others) <http://www.imagescanada.ca/index-e.html>
American Memory (by LC and others) <http://memory.loc.gov>
Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network (SCRAN) <http://www.scran.ac.uk>

Developments in digital technologies and interoperability of systems enables cross-sectoral participation and harvesting of metadata, while the Internet provides the delivery mechanism. Overseas major funding opportunities for digitisation have encouraged organisations to create digital material and convert existing material into digital format.

The Local Picture

In New Zealand many organisations have not yet had the opportunity to undertake large digitisation projects, mainly due to lack of funding. However this is likely to change in the future as many organisations seek to gain the benefits digitisation brings to our institutions, and see the relevance to our core missions, or institutional objectives. Key benefits are:

- Creation of unique NZ/Pacific Resources
- Increased access to resources
- Preservation of original resources
- Efficient management of resources

Eventually all organisations will be involved in digitisation in some way, and we must therefore plan strategically for the changes. We want it to happen efficiently and effectively. Strategic planning is necessary because digitisation affects the Infrastructure:

- IT
- Staff
- Service Delivery
- Organisation Structure

Initially digitisation is an exercise in change management, and there may be resistance not so much to the digitisation itself, but to the changes it causes. However over time it will become assimilated into the normal workflow and environment, so much so that as Marc Weiser once said “the most profound technologies are those that weave themselves into the fabric of everyday life until they are indistinguishable from it”.

The Digitisation Framework at the University of Auckland Library

Three years the University Librarian decided that digitisation issues and potential projects warranted appointing a full-time Digital Projects Librarian, who could become an expert in the field. The importance of digitisation in achieving the strategic objectives of the University mission had been recognised. Hence my appointment was made. Over the last 3 years I have developed a framework for digitisation activities.

The Digitisation Framework consists of the following elements.

1. Inventory of Digitisation Projects
2. Raising Awareness of Digitisation
3. Training and re-skilling staff in digitisation activities
4. Developing networks, collaborations and relationships for digitisation activities
5. Obtaining funding to support digitisation
6. Instigating Digitisation Projects
7. Enhancing the IT Infrastructure
8. Strategic Planning and Policy Development

1. Inventory of Digitisation Projects

Aim: To identify all potential projects and create a database containing details of potential projects with rough costings.

What we did:

- Held a seminar on digitisation and the proposed inventory for all Library Staff.
- Sent out proposal forms and questionnaires to 15 libraries.
- Followed up forms with personal visits.
- Created a database and entered details of 30 potential projects.

What we learnt:

- There was a general lack of awareness about what digitisation is, what the benefits to the organisation are, and how it can be applied in the workplace.
- Librarians preferred the ‘consultancy approach’ i.e. the Digital Projects Librarian discussing and suggesting ideas with them and then making recommendations on their behalf.
- Suggestions were held back for fear of “too much extra work and who will do it?”

- Excellent collection knowledge, understanding of users needs and digitisation principles was required for librarians to be able to make suggestions.
- Many of the resources that were most suitable for digitisation were not the ones that were currently the most heavily used due to format and access restrictions.

2. Raising Awareness of Digitisation

Aim: To raise the awareness of University Staff about the benefits of digitisation.

What we did:

- Digitisation Seminars for Library Staff.
- Articles in the Library staff newsletter.
- Conference paper for University of Auckland Staff.
(http://www2.auckland.ac.nz/lbr/genlib/digital_docs/DIGITALDELICACIES.ppt)
- Intranet Page (Library) and Internet Page on Digital Projects.
(http://www2.auckland.ac.nz/lbr/genlib/digital_services.htm)
- Talking to people.

What we learnt:

- Both internal and external interest in what we were doing.
- Most people are very interested in digitisation.
- Faculties wanted to know if we could help them with their potential projects.
- When people saw a practical application in their subject area it piqued their interest.
- Digitisation invoked fear in some people (fear of technology, changes, making mistakes, creating extra work).

3. Training and re-skilling staff in digitisation activities

Aim: To develop and enhance knowledge and expertise in-house.

What we did:

- Sent key staff on training courses.
- Passed on training to other staff e.g. scanning workshop.
- Read about digitisation issues and projects in journals, web resources and listservs.

The types of training we needed were quite varied for example project management, XML, scanning workshops, metadata, digitisation principles and practice, TEI (text encoding), copyright and intellectual property rights, and software specific e.g. databases, image manipulation software, OCR software.

What we learnt:

- Digitisation training is scarce in NZ and Australia.
- Practical training must be timely and followed up with practice e.g. scanning.
- Different people need the training e.g. cataloguers need metadata, systems need XML, managers need project management etc.
- Some staff already have natural aptitude, skills or interest in some areas that can be utilised e.g. photography, image manipulation.
- Training is expensive and limited so invest wisely.

4. Developing networks, collaborations and relationships for digitisation activities

Aim: To establish useful contacts for help and collaboration

What we did:

- Joined international digital listservs.
- Networked at conferences and on training.
- Talked with the National Library and the NLA.
- Participated in the National Digital Forum (<http://ndf.natlib.govt.nz/index.htm>)

What we learnt:

- There was initial isolation and very few contacts in the digital field in NZ. (There is now the National Digital Forum and a NZ Digital Listserv has been set up).
- The best source of help and contacts was the Diglib listserv (an international listserv for digitisation professionals and librarians).
- We had to tread carefully with possible collaborations. Digitisation encourages collaboration but most organisations are still stuck in the 'competition' not collaboration mindset.
- Internationally people were very willing to help and share their experiences.
- NZ has a distinct advantage being at an early stage of digitisation activities, because we can learn from others mistakes, policies, structures and standards. We should be able to get it right first time.

5. Obtaining funding to support digitisation

Aim: To get money for projects!

What we did:

- Applied for University funding e.g. Teaching Improvement Grants, Vice Chancellors Development Fund.
- Kept looking for national or international funding or grants e.g. Lottery.
- Established a small budget for ongoing digitisation.

What we learnt:

- Digitisation is very expensive and the monetary cost cannot usually be recovered – your managers need to understand and accept this. However the benefits to your organisation may outweigh the cost on high profile successful projects.
- We usually got a lot less money than we applied for which meant major revisions of project plans. Projects become 'pilots' or in 'phases'.
- Putting an application in for a small pilot project was usually successful and effective. All the issues faced in a major project would have to be tackled in a pilot.
- Special grants may cover setting up an initial project but not ongoing maintenance. This is a BIG problem.
- A digitisation maintenance fund should be built into the budget if possible.
- National and government funding for digitisation in NZ is almost non-existent. This is something we would like to lobby for in the future.
- International funding opportunities often had catches for us e.g. someone else would keep our original raw data, or our resource must be publicly available (usually couldn't for copyright reasons).

6. Instigating Digitisation Projects

Aim: To create and deliver our own resources digitally (e.g. Exam Papers, E-Reserves, Poetry, Art Images).

What we did:

- After obtaining funding made a start on four pilot projects.
- Followed a detailed project plan including costings, timeframes.
- Set up project teams and involved several staff e.g. systems, digital services, cataloguing, subject librarians, managers, lawyer.
- Outsourced some work due to lack of experience/equipment/staff in-house.
- Able to build on the pilot projects and use the experience we gained to further develop the projects and obtain more funding.

What we learnt:

- Just make a start and do it. Don't wait for the perfect time – there will never be one!
- A small pilot addresses all the issues you are likely to face in a big project.
- Work with those that are interested.
- Get an advocate or champion at top level.
- Managing people, politics and change is usually more challenging and time consuming than the technology.
- Having a project plan and understanding the process is essential especially if outsourcing.
- Only start on projects that do not have insurmountable copyright or cultural sensitivity issues and make sure you check this first.
- Double the time you think you need (especially for copyright issues).
- The outcome was always worth the effort and well received by users.

7. Enhancing the IT Infrastructure

Aim: Trained staff are fully able to utilise existing and new technologies to create, deliver and manage digital projects.

Key components of the infrastructure are:

- Hardware e.g. scanners, pc's, digital camera's
- Software e.g. Image manipulation software, XML editors, OCR programmes
- Library Management/Digital Object Management System
- Network
- Authentication System
- IT Staff

We are quite fortunate at the University of Auckland having a strong IT infrastructure with very able members of staff and a good budget. This enabled us to make an almost immediate start on projects without having to make major enhancements to the infrastructure first.

What we did:

- Audited existing hardware and software that would be useful in projects (e.g. Scanners, digital cameras, CD-Burners, databases, OCR and image manipulation software, PDF writer, XML editors). Who has it and where?
- Thought about how current software could be utilised in particular the Library Management System (Endeavor), Inmagic and Access.
- Purchased additional hardware and software (Scanner, server, storage device, EnCompass, Mr Sid, Map Catalogue, Finereader).
- Training on new software.

What we learnt:

- We could do it!
- Some projects could be completed within existing IT infrastructure.
- Planning for the future was important e.g. storage requirements.
- Don't wait until everything is perfect – it never will be, just make a start.

8. Strategic Planning and Policy Development.

Aims: To plan and achieve digitisation effectively by including digitisation activities in the Library Strategic Plan. To develop a Digitisation Policy that will outline goals, guiding principles, selection criteria, management and access to digital collections, digital standards and guidelines to follow, intellectual property rights and digital preservation.

What we did:

- Included major projects, training, awareness and IT infrastructure tasks in the Library Strategic Plan.
- Wrote a comprehensive Digitisation Policy including selection guidelines, goals, standards, and approaches.

(http://www.lbr.auckland.ac.nz/docs_public/digital_projects/Policy.pdf)

What we learnt:

- We did these things last – but it helps if you do them first!
- Having tasks in the Strategy Plan ensures they get done.
- Writing a Digitisation Policy from scratch was hard because it raised so many issues that needed discussion, and some areas we still lacked knowledge in.
- The Policy needs regularly updating.
- We needed to write a context document explaining why we needed a new policy.
(http://www2.auckland.ac.nz/lbr/genlib/digital_docs/Contextv2.pdf)
- Many people felt unable to give constructive comment about the new policy due to lack of knowledge.

Future Development of The Digitisation Framework at the University of Auckland Library

The above 8 elements have taken 3 years to achieve but we still feel we have further to go. We feel more ready to undertake a major project and collaborate in national projects. Specific objectives we wish to achieve are:

- Setting up a 'Digitisation Centre' at the University.
- Building Digitisation into the normal workflow processes (assimilation).
- Maintaining a digitisation budget for maintenance work.
- Seeking national and international funding for new projects.
- Looking for collaborations.
- Continuing to develop the IT infrastructure and expand our knowledge and expertise.
- Keeping our Digitisation Policy up to date and at the centre of our Framework.

In addition we intend to continue participating in the establishment of the National Digital Forum. Some of the strategic objectives of the NDF (still under discussion) are lobbying for funding, providing training, creating a national digital resource for New Zealand Aotearoa, and providing help to other members. We hope the expertise we have gained can be utilised by others through the Forum.

Developing a Digitisation Framework for your Organisation

Learning from our experiences may give you an idea of some of the issues involved in developing a digitisation framework for your organisation. I believe all libraries and archives need to begin addressing these issues now and developing a framework for themselves. Digitisation is going to happen in your organisation sooner or later and it is far better to be prepared for it so that it can happen successfully with minimum fuss and shock. Having a framework takes away some of the fear and uncertainties and enables a more structured approach to digitisation activities. By evaluating the 8 elements we have discussed you will be in a good position to see which areas need particular development in your organisation. I am not suggesting that we have developed our framework in the right order or included everything that we should have, and in retrospect there are some things we should have done differently, but even so I believe our experiences are valuable to share. To make a constructive start on your framework I would strongly suggest your organisation does the following things:

- Make someone responsible for digitisation in your organisation or create a 'digitisation steering group'.
- Get a champion for digitisation at top level.
- Develop a digitisation policy (Use ours as a starting point).
- Do an audit of useful hardware/software, staff skills and possible projects. You will then know how your IT infrastructure needs developing, have a staff training plan, and a list of potential projects to start on. In essence you will know what you've got and whom you've got to work with.
- Keep up to date with digital developments by joining the diglib listserv (<http://ndf.natlib.govt.nz/resources/maillinglists.htm>) using the National Digital Forum website, and reading any relevant articles.
- Look for suitable training opportunities and attend those that are relevant.
- Build digitisation activities into your strategic plan.
- Look for funding opportunities and collaborations.
- Start a small pilot project.

Conclusion

In conclusion I think that Library Managers need to move with the times and prepare strategically for digitisation even if at this stage it is unclear where the funding will come from. Digitisation is not so much to do with technology (which seems to be what scare people off) but more to do with change management. To use the famous quote of Charles Darwin 'it is not the strongest of the species that survives, not the most intelligent, but the ones that are most responsive to change.' Digitisation is a tool for information professionals that will open the door to new technologies and new techniques of information delivery, enabling us to successfully achieve our information goals and needs in a global digital society. Having a framework will help us to achieve this efficiently and effectively. So 'feel the fear and do it anyway'.

Useful Links

1. University of Auckland Library Digital Policy
http://www.lbr.auckland.ac.nz/docs_public/digital_projects/Policy.pdf
2. Context Document for Digital Policy

http://www2.auckland.ac.nz/lbr/genlib/digital_docs/Contextv2.pdf

3. National Digital Forum Website

<http://ndf.natlib.govt.nz/index.htm>

4. DigLib Listserv and others

<http://ndf.natlib.govt.nz/resources/maillinglists.htm>