Digitization Policy Areas
Results from the Digitization Policy Workshop
Chicago, April, 2006
Sponsored by the Digitization Policy Workgroup of
the OITP Advisory Committee

The Internet has brought the world of information to classrooms, homes and offices of people worldwide. For over a decade now, libraries and other cultural heritage institutions have been opening their rare and fragile collections to scholars and grade school children alike by digitizing these collections and making them available via the internet. In the last year, libraries have been moving from smaller digitization projects to mass digitization projects that will eventually make available whole collections, including millions of books. Funding agencies are supporting research and demonstration projects that aid libraries and cultural heritage institutions in better understanding digitization processes, web harvesting, tool development, and assessment and evaluation. All of this has taken place without a coherent body of policy to guide decision-making.

The American Library Association’s Office of Information Technology Policy (OITP) Advisory Committee hosted the Digitization Policy Workshop attended by representatives from a wide variety organizations from the library and cultural heritage community on April 5-7, 2006. Attendees at the Digitization Policy workshop, representing a wide range of professional associations in the library and cultural heritage arena, have developed a statement of priorities for policy development. The areas most in need of policy include:

- Funding models that support long term sustainable efforts
- Control of digital resources through licensing and law
- Rights management for digitization, preservation and access
- Preservation capabilities and rights
- Standards and best practices

Within these areas the following policy and activity areas need to be addressed:

- Commitment to the cultural commons, including the promotion of open access to all materials and support for the public domain
- Need to promote broad collaboration, including international collaboration for both projects and funding.
- Commitment to sustainable efforts for the digital materials, with ongoing funding and strong institutional support.
Need to affirm legal mandates for preservation and digital curation, and to create indemnifications for cultural institutions undertaking digitization and digital preservation.

Development of community standards for all areas of digital curation, and a broad sharing of best practices for both technology solutions and business models.

Support for licenses and partnership agreements that are non-exclusive and that include no restrictions on use.

Recognition of the global reach of digital assets and the changing role of libraries in serving that broader public.

Increased and specific education for information professionals in all areas of digital resources, including technology, funding, and public service, and education for the public that is served.

Creation and promulgation of a shared vocabulary that is not specific to libraries or to other cultural institutions; that can communicate to members of the wider technology community, to funding organizations and to legislators.
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