

4-2-2024

Appraisal for Digitization

Kelley Rowan
Florida International University, krowan@fiu.edu

Wolfsonian Public Humanities Lab-FIU

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/wphl-da>

Recommended Citation

Rowan, Kelley and Wolfsonian Public Humanities Lab-FIU, "Appraisal for Digitization" (2024). *Wolfsonian Public Humanities Lab (WPHL) Digital Archive*. 17.
<https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/wphl-da/17>

This work is brought to you for free and open access by FIU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Wolfsonian Public Humanities Lab (WPHL) Digital Archive by an authorized administrator of FIU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact dcc@fiu.edu.

Appraisal for Digitization

Authored by Kelley Rowan

In archival science, the process of appraisal is to determine if an item, collection, etc. has "permanent archival value." As anyone in cultural heritage knows, it is nearly impossible to accept and accession every single item and/or collection offered to an institution: staffing, limited storage space, and more make this impossible. It is similar with digital archives; limited server space, funds, and personnel make trying to digitize all holdings a daunting task. Therefore, we use an appraisal process to prioritize the digitization of items, with some items and collections having priority over others. This section of the manual will explain how to appraise items in your collection for digitization.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

An Appraisal Matrix

The following table represents a matrix that can be used to appraise individual collections for digitization. The table was created by Jamie Rogers of FIU Libraries and Karen Urbec, formerly of Vizcaya Museum & Gardens.

	Collection 1	Collection 2	Collection 3	Collection 4
Usage (physical materials) 1=Low to 5=High				
Anticipated usage (digital materials) 1=Low to 5=High				
Unique content 1=Common to 5=Rare				
Copyrights cleared (1=no, 3=in process, 5=cleared)				
Condition (1=excellent to 5=poor)				
Within scope mission/collection development 1=no to 5=yes				
Total				

Value and Cost

Before beginning the appraisal process, review all documentation related to the mission or charge of the institution. Be sure your organization is the best fit for a collection and that you will be able to provide both access and long-term preservation of the digital content created.

Some important questions to ask include:

- i. Is this content already accessible elsewhere?
- ii. What is the value of this content to the institution and the intended audience?
- iii. Is our institution the best fit for this content?
- iv. Is it worth the cost of providing long-term access, server space, and preservation?
- v. Do we already have the required software/hardware needed to digitize, store, and handle the file formats?
- vi. Do we have the staff and time to digitize and perform preservation tasks?

If the content is not already accessible elsewhere (in a digital format), the content fits your charge or mission, and the cost is not more than the value to the institution and audience, then you can move on to questions of ownership and copyright.

Ownership and Copyright

Best practice is to determine and document copyright ownership during the acquisition stage. Keep in mind that copyright owners are not required to register their copyright or provide a copyright symbol on the document in order for their content to be protected by copyright laws. In this stage you will also want to determine accessibility.

- i. Will this be open access for everyone?
- ii. Will it be IP restricted to on-site usage?
- iii. Will only metadata be available, and all other access strictly vetted (or unavailable)?
 - a. If unavailable, you may want to revisit the value of the content to the institution.

You will want to determine these needs before acquiring or digitizing content and be sure your institution can meet the requirements of the owner, donor, or of the copyright requirements. It is important to begin your copyright documentation during the acquisition stage and continue updating it as needed throughout the life of the content. For a fuller discussion on copyright and fair use, please see the following chapter of this document.

Prioritizing acquisitions

How you prioritize your acquisitions will depend on factors such as physical and server space, available technology and staff, and copyright clearance. How quickly the project needs to be

completed may depend on community partnerships and their availability or grant deadlines. The following are some basic guidelines to help facilitate the acquisition stage.

Before accepting content or physical items, make sure you can keep these items safe:

- i. Do they need to be stored in locked cabinets or require special care?
- ii. Is a natural disaster a real possibility for your institution?
 - a. If so, how will you keep partner content safe?

Do not feel that you need to take possession of all content at once. Start with the content for digitization that clearly meets your institution's scope and has been copyright cleared and only accept content you know can be safely stored until digitized.