



DIGITIZATION AND DIGITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT POLICY

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I. Purpose

This directive describes the policy for the acquisition, creation, management and oversight of Smithsonian digital assets, and mandates development of unit digitization and digital asset management plans. It also establishes the functions and roles of the Smithsonian's Digitization Program Office (DPO), which oversees the implementation of this policy.

II. Principles

The following principles provide the basis for this policy:

- Digitization of the collections (including ancillary information and objects) and management of born-digital materials (assets originally created in digital format) support the Smithsonian's strategic plan and are important goals for the Institution;
- Units, programs, research centers and offices are responsible for setting priorities for digitization, for maintaining digital assets under their control, and for establishing written unit digitization plans and project digital asset management plans that document how these assets are developed and administered throughout their life cycle;
- Digital assets are intended to be usable and interoperable;

II. Principles (continued)

- Digital assets are publicly accessible unless covered by an allowable restriction category, as set forth in SD 609, *Digital Asset Access and Use*;
 - Digital assets are valuable resources and their future economic sustainability throughout their life cycle should be considered at the time of asset creation or acquisition; and
 - The acquisition of objects and collections by Smithsonian units should include provisions for creating and sustaining the digital assets associated with these acquisitions.
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III. Background

In 2009, the Institution launched a digitization strategic planning initiative, recognizing that digitization is a core activity of the Institution, undertaken to make Smithsonian resources available for the widest possible use by current and future generations. The resulting digitization strategic plan established the requirement for a pan-Institutional policy and guidance to ensure that the Smithsonian manages its digital assets throughout their life cycle as an enterprise resource, and to ensure that digitization efforts are implemented with the highest degree of professionalism and expertise.

Effectively managing the Smithsonian's digital resources should:

- increase the number and quality of digital assets;
- enhance the usability and interoperability of digital assets;
- allow for greater interaction with users via different technology platforms, such as the Internet and mobile computing;
- preserve digital assets that are in danger of loss due to deterioration or obsolescence;
- enhance preservation of physical assets, including collections, by reducing wear and tear on originals;

III. Background (continued)

- use resources more effectively to achieve greater efficiencies in workflow, in use of technologies, and in use of the expertise that is available across the Institution.

Because digital assets are created and acquired at the unit level, stewardship begins at this level. Units must develop digitization and digital asset management plans to guarantee Smithsonian digital resources will be accessible into the future so the Institution can continue pursuing its mission to increase and diffuse knowledge throughout the world.

IV. Scope

This directive applies to all units that acquire, create, or maintain Smithsonian digital assets, prepare them for data interchange and interoperability to support sharing and repurposing, or manage other life-cycle functions of these assets.

This directive covers collections that are digital, which are also subject to SD 600, *Collections Management*. SD 600 and this policy will be harmonized further in future revisions. If there are conflicting requirements between this policy and SD 600, the latter takes precedence for collections that are digital.

Policies governing access and use of digital assets are set forth in SD 609, *Digital Asset Access and Use*.

This directive covers all digital assets of the Institution *except* those assets that contain records of the Institution, as defined by SD 807, *Requests for Smithsonian Institution Information*.¹ These assets are covered under SD 501, *Archives and Records of the Smithsonian Institution*.

V. Definitions

- **Accessibility** — refers to the relative ease with which digital assets are available through

¹ SD 807 defines the business records of the Institution as email, contracts, employee records, donor, vendor and lender records, and other information created, stored, or maintained by the Smithsonian in the course of conducting its business.

V. Definitions
(continued)

technological means to be accessed, shared, exchanged, and otherwise used.

- **Digital asset** — content that is recorded and transferred in a digital format. It may include text, still images, moving images and sound recordings, collections that are digital (i.e., digital art), research datasets and other types of media originally created in digital format or digitized from another format or state (i.e., a digital surrogate) that are created, stored, or maintained by the Smithsonian. For the purpose of this directive, digital assets also include metadata used to describe the digital asset and its content.
- **Digitization** — a set of processes that converts physical resources to a digital form, or that creates materials in a digital form (born digital). These processes include:
 - Identification, selection and prioritization of materials to be digitized;
 - Digital asset creation or conversion;
 - Creation of descriptive and technical metadata sufficient to allow retrieval and management of the digital assets and to provide basic contextual information for the user; and
 - Quality control of digital assets and metadata.
- **Disposition** — the process of permanently removing a digital asset from the Institution by transferring it to another entity or, if it is no longer needed, by destroying it.
- **Interoperability** — the ability of diverse systems to work together effectively.
- **Life-cycle management** — a comprehensive approach to managing digital assets that addresses these assets through all the stages of their “life.” (Also see “Project digital asset management plan,” below.) It begins with planning for the creation or acquisition of a digital asset, continues through the maintenance and use of the asset, and ends only

V. Definitions
(continued)

when the asset is legally transferred to another entity or disposed. Life-cycle management functions are sequential but a digital asset may go through certain stages of the life cycle multiple times as it is used by different groups or for different purposes.

- **Metadata** — the information used to describe the intellectual content as well as the technical properties of a digital asset, such as date/time of creation, subject, restrictions, equipment used, dimensions, location, title or other descriptors. It may be structured (following Smithsonian and community-specific guidelines) in ways that allow easier access and interoperability, and that ensure the asset can be used in the long term.
- **Preservation** — the process of maintaining digital assets in a usable form across time, formats, and media.
- **Project digital asset management plan** — a written plan associated with a unit project that defines the roles, responsibilities, and processes needed to ensure the systematic attention to a digital asset throughout its life cycle, from creation or collection, through use, preservation and, if appropriate, disposition. (Also see “Life-cycle management,” above.) The plan addresses aspects such as impact and use, creation and receipt of data, description of data, access issues, preservation for long-term sustainability, and ownership. (In an information technology context, these plans may also be referred to as data management plans.)
- **Trusted digital repository (TDR)** — a mechanism for providing reliable, long-term access to the managed digital resources of those who deposit their digital assets in the repository. A TDR:
 - Consists of hardware, software, human resources and administrative structures to support the viability of the repository;

V. Definitions (continued)

- Must be economically sustainable and have practices and policies that ensure the ongoing access and management of the deposited digital assets;
 - May be local, central or distributed in infrastructure and management.
- **Unit** — a Smithsonian museum, research center, or office. For the purpose of this directive, a unit includes all the employees, volunteers, interns, contractors, Fellows, and collaborators associated with the unit.
 - **Unit digitization plan** — a written plan that defines a unit's digitization program. The plan addresses aspects such as unit objectives and priorities for digitization, responsible parties for unit-based digitization activities, performance metrics and digitization funding sources.

VI. Roles and Responsibilities

The **Secretary** is responsible for establishing the Institution's goals to facilitate digitization of Smithsonian resources at the highest standards of excellence, for scholarly research, and educational purposes. The Secretary may delegate to other staff the responsibility to implement this policy and carry out the direct management of digitization activities.

The **Under Secretaries** are responsible for ensuring that digitization at the Smithsonian is carried out in compliance with this policy through oversight of unit directors and by approving unit digitization plans. The Under Secretaries or their delegates may provide overarching digitization goals for their units, reflecting Institutional priorities and programs as a basis for unit digitization plans and digitization goals.

Unit directors are responsible for ensuring that their unit's digitization activities, including development of unit digitization plans (and their associated progress reports) and project digital asset management plans, are carried out in compliance with this policy, and are attainable with available resources. Unit directors are the initial approval authority for these plans, and must

VI. Roles and Responsibilities
(continued)

submit them to the DPO and the Under Secretary who oversees their unit. Unit directors may delegate authority and assign responsibility for the development of these plans to appropriate unit staff.

The **Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO)** is responsible for developing and maintaining the information technology infrastructure that supports the Institution's digitization efforts. The OCIO oversees the activities of the DPO and consults with the Secretary, Under Secretaries, and unit directors about information technology needs in support of this policy.

The **National Collections Program (NCP)** is responsible for improving the stewardship and management of Smithsonian collections by providing central leadership and policy oversight of Institution-wide collections initiatives, including the administration and implementation of SD 600, *Collections Management*, and the review and approval of collecting unit collections management policies. The NCP is responsible for coordinating with the DPO collections management policies that may affect implementation of the requirements set forth in this directive for collections that are digital.

The **Digitization Program Office (DPO)** is responsible for improving the overall stewardship and long-term management of the Smithsonian's digital assets by providing leadership and policy oversight of the pan-Institutional digitization program. Working with Smithsonian senior management, and in concert with a Digitization Program Advisory Committee (DPAC), the DPO guides implementation of the Smithsonian's digitization strategic plan, and develops long-term strategies, policy, best practices and procedures that address pan-Institutional digitization needs.

The DPO also: advises senior management on effective implementation of this directive and recommends revisions, as appropriate; assists units in developing unit digitization plans and project digital asset management plans; recommends unit digitization plans for approval by the Under Secretaries;

VI. Roles and Responsibilities
(continued)

aggregates and reports statistics regarding unit digitization activities; and serves as a coordinating unit for digitization across the Institution and communicating Institutional digitization priorities as appropriate. In addition, the DPO keeps abreast of best practices in digitization and serves as the Smithsonian's representative to external forums such as interagency committees and working groups, and national and international conferences.

As part of its oversight of this directive, the DPO is responsible for developing guidelines for the unit digitization and project digital asset management plans called for in this directive, and for initiating the call for units to submit these plans.

The ***Digitization Program Advisory Committee*** (DPAC), composed of representatives from across the Institution, assists the DPO in implementing the digitization strategic plan by advising on policies, standards, priorities, processes, performance metrics, and funding strategies for digitization at the Institution.

VII. Unit Digitization Plans

Each unit shall develop a unit digitization plan that defines the unit's digitization program, reflecting a balance between unit and Institutional priorities. Each unit's digitization plan will be approved by the unit director and submitted to the Under Secretary responsible for the unit and to the DPO. The DPO shall provide units with guidance on the development of these plans.

Units must review and update digitization plans every three years. In addition, they submit annual reports to the DPO which track progress against their established goals, using metrics defined in unit digitization plans.

VIII. Project Digital Asset Management Plans

All digital assets shall be associated with a unit project. For the purpose of this policy, a unit project is defined as a concentrated group of digitization or collecting activities that take place as part of a larger unit program and that exist to support the goals and objectives of

**VIII. Project Digital
Asset Management
Plans** (continued)

that program. Unit projects have well-defined scopes and can be of varying size and duration. Units determine what constitutes a project, and define a project's parameters.

Units shall develop digital asset management plans for every unit project that collects or creates digital assets. These plans must cover the full data life cycle (from planning for data creation to accessible archiving, preservation, and possible disposition) for each unit project that creates or collects digital assets. The DPO shall provide units with guidance in developing these plans. Project digital asset management plans will be approved by the unit director and submitted to the DPO.

Project digital asset management plans shall be developed at the beginning of every new project and shall be updated and revised as a project continues, in accordance with the scope and needs of each project.

Units also shall ensure that their unit digitization plans provide yearly goals that identify the number of project digital asset management plans they intend to develop for their unit's extant and legacy projects.

New and revised project digital asset management plans shall be approved by the unit director and submitted to the DPO.

CANCELLATION:

None.

INQUIRIES:

Office of Digital Transformation (ODT) in the Office of the Deputy Secretary/Chief Operating Officer (ODS/COO)

RETENTION:

Indefinite. Subject to review for currency 24 months from date of issue