

Opportunities, Challenges, and Priorities: Developing a Collaborative Digitization Plan for the Mid-Hudson Valley

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 2001, the Southeastern Library Resources Council (SENYLRC) received a \$41,777 grant from the Library Services and Technology Act for the purpose of developing a region-wide plan for the digitization of library, archival, museum, and other important materials in the pursuit of making them more accessible to researchers. SENYLRC is looking to develop a digitization strategy that is appropriate and consistent with library development in its region, the Mid-Hudson Valley. In the grant proposal, SENYLRC laid out its vision: “The program plan will identify and prioritize regional collection for ongoing digitizing purposes; address issues in the management of digital information; identify partners building on current endeavors such as that of the FDR Library in Hyde Park; and develop the design for a portal or gateway which incorporates the digitized resources and the Southeastern Virtual Union Catalog into a regional digital library.”

The goals of the project were to:

- Develop a regional digitizing program which will provide access to targeted primary source materials defining this region’s identity,
- Develop guidelines and criteria for selecting materials to be digitized which will conform to a regionally identified theme while remaining flexible to accommodate local initiatives,
- Work with digital players in the region to develop a regionally supported funding program,
- Identify current digital institutes and work with groups to implement an institute in the Southeastern region, and
- Establish a collaborative management structure to coordinate and guide the implementation and ongoing maintenance of a regional digital program.

In connection with these goals, the function of this report within the overall framework of SENYLRC’s plan is one of exploration and identification. This report attempts to identify, describe and understand the nature of digitization efforts in the region and other efforts that may eventually lead to a virtual library. It seeks to identify the major players in the region who are willing to enter into partnership with SENYLRC, identify potential difficulties that will arise in the process of developing this plan, and to provide a base of information with which SENYLRC can use to move forward with its plans. Before moving on to discussing specific projects and recommendations, it will be prudent to provide a basic understanding of the demographic makeup of the Southeastern region.

The Southeastern New York Library Resources Council is a regional, not-for-profit, multi-type library cooperative encompassing the eight counties of Columbia, Greene, Ulster, Dutchess, Orange, Sullivan, Putnam and Rockland. Over one million people reside within the 5,372 square mile area served by the Council. The region encompasses a diverse range of communities, population levels, and ethnic groups.

At the region's southern tip is Rockland County, a small but populous and urban county bordering on New Jersey and well within commuter range of New York City. At its most western point, in Sullivan County, the economy and lifestyle is largely agricultural, reflecting a sparsely populated county, despite its large land area. The remaining counties can largely be defined by their respective locations relative to the Hudson River. On the east side of the river are the generally wealthy counties of Columbia, Dutchess, and Putnam. Bearing testament to a well-planned system of land development under many very influential English aristocrats are a large number of significant historic sites, including the Franklin Delanor Roosevelt Federal Historic Site, Olana, Mills Mansion, Martin Van Buren Historic Site, Springside, and the Samuel F.B. Morse Historic Site. There are also three significant colleges located on the east side of the river, all in Dutchess County: Vassar College, Marist College, and Bard College. Of the three counties, Dutchess is the largest, hosting a population of 280,150 residents, while both Putnam and Columbia Counties each hold less than 100,000.

In contrast, the three counties bordering on the west side of the River, excluding Rockland, represent a more diverse and unplanned historical development. Originally agriculturally based, Greene, Ulster and Orange Counties are still known for their farms and orchards. The Town of Shawagunk in Ulster County was the home of the Borden Family who developed condensed milk, for example. Today, the three counties are heavily invested in the Tourism Industry, and boast a number of historic sites, wineries, festivals, resorts, and other attractions. Sites of prominence include Washington's Headquarters, the Senate House State Historic Site, the D&H Canal Museum, the Hudson River Maritime Museum, Mohonk Mountain House, Huguenot Street, and the Shawagunk Wine Trail. These three counties also boast three colleges: the State University of New York at New Paltz, Mount Saint Mary College, and the United States Military Academy at West Point. Among the three counties, Orange is the largest, in both land area and population, hosting 341,367 residents. Ulster County holds 177,749, and Greene 48,195.

Lastly, one of the most obvious characteristics of the region is its notable lack of large metropolitan areas. The largest city in the region is Mount Vernon with a population approaching 70,000. Otherwise, the next three largest cities are Poughkeepsie, in Dutchess County, Newburgh, in Orange County, and Kingston in Ulster County, all with populations near the 30,000 mark. The lack of a large metropolitan area on the scale of Rochester or Buffalo will prove to be one of the challenges in developing a collaborative digitization initiative within the region.

In attempting to build a large-scale collaborative project on the regional level, it will be necessary to identify and make use of common characteristics when attempting to foster communication and cooperation between them. Luckily, there are a few shared characteristics that can be used as unifiers. For example, all of the counties in the region, with the partial exception of Sullivan County, share three common attributes. The first of these is a rich history stretching back to the 17th century, which includes a number of significant events. Some of these events include Henry Hudson's first voyage in 1609; early settlement and relations with the Native American Indian Tribes; agricultural development and Industrialization; the Revolutionary War; and the Hudson River School. The second unifying factor is the Hudson River itself, which provides not only a focus for historical study, but also for some of the main political issues in the region today, most notably tourism, business development, and environmentalism. A possible third common thread can be found in the ethnic diversity in the region that has existed since its beginning and persists even today. These three broad thematic identifiers provide the necessary cohesive elements on which to build a successful regional digitization initiative. SENYLRC, in using these themes as points of focus, can encourage and support a wide variety of collaborative projects, while still clearly defining its scope and direction.

II. AN EXAMINATION OF DIGITIZATION EFFORTS UNDERTAKEN WITHIN THE SOUTHEASTERN REGION

Overall, it can be said that digitization plays an important role for a small number of repositories within the region, (mostly notably three academic libraries and two public libraries). The majority of repositories within the region, however, feel that they are unready to make the commitment to participate in large-scale collaborative digitization projects. They simply lack the necessary expertise, infrastructure, and resources to lead or fully participate in digitization projects, specifically in relation to the primary source materials that most feel should be the first items targeted for digitization. The large amount of the historical treasures still lying in the region's repositories remains unorganized, uncataloged, and largely inaccessible. It is for this reason that the region is known unofficially among genealogical circles as the "black hole of genealogy." Furthermore, only a select handful of organizations hold collections of materials that are indexed in such a way that would facilitate digitization. As a general rule, any digitization project undertaken in the region will necessitate some degree of archival arrangement, description, and rehousing as part of the digitization process. However, despite this grim outlook, there are a number of isolated digitization efforts underway that the region may look to for guidance, expertise, and as models for future projects. The following discussion focuses on these projects, and attempts to provide a clear picture of the issues surrounding digitization within the region.

During the period from December 2000 to April 2001, 19 interviews were held with information professionals from libraries, archives, museums, library and museum councils, and government agencies in the region for the purpose of gauging the experience, attitudes, and place of digitization within the area's information centers. Individuals and repositories were selected for interviews based on their experience with specific digitization efforts or collection management programs. Although the interviews were informal in nature, each interviewee was asked to answer several questions in regard to digitization and collections management. They were asked to briefly describe three main areas: 1) digitization projects currently in progress or in the planning stages, 2) problems encountered or foreseen, and 3) the advantages and disadvantages in pursuing such projects, as seen in hindsight. And as an extra area of discussion, the interview participants were also asked about what they felt SENYLRC's role should be, and whether or not they, as regional repositories would be interested in collaborating with SENYLRC in their efforts to develop a regional digitization plan.

The participants in the interviews were drawn from several sources. Some names were obtained directly from recommendations made by SENYLRC staff and others were gained during the interview process. However, the main source of information for this study was the *Directory of Historical Records Repositories of Southeastern New York*, compiled by SENYLRC in 1999. The *Directory* lists 302 organizations that maintain historical records in their holdings. From these records, it was possible to browse dozens of websites of repositories within the region and to obtain information about each organization's level of collection management and any recent or planned digitization initiatives, as well as the contact information for potential participants in the collaborative effort. Not all repositories approached were necessarily members of SENYLRC. Further, it must be noted that one of the limitations of this is its focus on historical records, namely print and photographic materials. The possibility of digitizing images of museum three-dimensional objects was not a major focus of study during the course of my research, but is certainly one that SENYLRC may wish to pursue in the future.

The types of organizations listed in the *Directory* represent a wide variety of repositories including government agencies and local municipalities, academic libraries, public libraries, state and federal historic sites, and private historical societies, museums, churches and religious organizations, schools, and businesses. The following summary of the interviews and website reviews is organized by type of repository, with the repositories being categorized into the following four groups: Government Agencies, Academic Libraries and Archives, Public Libraries and Library Systems, and Private Organizations. This last category includes historical societies and private museums, religious archives, businesses, schools, and charitable or political nonprofit organizations. At this point it is necessary to mention that federal historic sites are not grouped into a separate category, but rather are treated as individual cases falling into the category of academic libraries. Specifically, the United States Military Academy is grouped with Academic Libraries and the digitization efforts of the Franklin Delanor Roosevelt Historic Site are given treatment during the discussion of the digital library project at Marist College.

1. Government Agencies

Of the eight counties in the region, only two county governments, **Putnam** and **Rockland**, have expressed any interest in undertaking digitization projects. Currently, both of these agencies have posted only basic descriptions of collections and series listings on their websites. However, Rockland County, in a partnership with the genealogical organization, *Rootsweb*, posted on the *Rootsweb* website a search-able index to Naturalization Records from New York State dating from 1812-1991. The index, located at (<http://www.rootsweb.com/~nyrockla/rcnaturalizations.htm>) was compiled by the Rockland County Clerk's Office. It includes 24,332 declarations of intent, plus 2,331 recorded oaths of allegiance, from book format as well as records that have been filmed and is search-able by surname, by year, or by Country or place of origin. The index itself was compiled as part of a microfilming project begun in 1996.

In addition to this project, there are several digitization and archival and records management projects currently in progress in Rockland County. The County Clerk's office has instituted a large scale imaging system and indexing scheme for the purpose of managing its current land records. When fully operational, this system will allow users to search land records going back to the 1960's at public access terminals located at the clerk's office. Other departments, including the Board of Elections and Social Services may also be looking into similar systems to manage their records, many of which are on microfilm. The Rockland County Archives has also developed databases and indexes for the purpose of tracking and searching several series of historical records, such as wills, marriage records, census records, estate records, and deed books.

Other collections that may be suitable for digitization projects include tax rolls, which are currently on microfilm, and the George Budke Collection which is stored at the New York Public Library, although Rockland County Archivist Peter Scheibner noted that NYPL has expressed no interest in any cooperative projects. In another project, the Rockland County Archives, in cooperation with agencies from three other municipal governments will soon be publishing a *Guide to the Archives of Orange and Rockland Counties and the Towns of Ramapo and Warwick*. Scheibner expressed interest in working with SENYLRC on its project to develop a regional digitization plan and in cooperative projects in general. He mentioned that the Rockland County Archives has a good working relationship with the Rockland County Historical Society, the Orange County Archives and other historical records repositories and municipalities. He also suggested that a digitization project might be a good way to provide access to historical records in Sullivan County, which lacks a formalized active archival program.

Both Putnam County and Rockland County expressed their position that posting descriptions and searchable indexes of large amounts of their holdings is preferable to digitizing the primary sources for online publication. In an interview with Sallie Sypher, the Putnam County Deputy Historian, she emphasized that intensive labor costs, costs and limitations of available technologies, and problems relating to selection, are all reasons to approach digitization cautiously. Ms. Sypher made it very clear that Putnam County favors providing searchable descriptive information about large portions of the collections in contrast to providing direct access to a more limited volume of digitized documents. Her sentiments were echoed by Sylvia Rozelle, Clerk of the **Town of Olive** in Ulster County, who in 1998 received an award from the New York State Archives for excellence in a local government records management program. In addition to expressing concerns about costs, labor, standards, and issues of technological obsolescence over time, she also noted concerns about maintaining the authenticity and integrity of government documents posted on the Internet. Also like Putnam and Rockland County, the Town of Olive would prefer to post descriptions of and finding aids and indexes to archival materials rather than digitized images of the items themselves.

The **Westchester County Archives**, although located outside the Southeastern Region, is worthy of note here for its work in the area of digitization. Their website (<http://www.co.westchester.ny.us./wcarchives/>) includes a variety of pages containing digitized images from its collections. One of these is a school activity project with narrative text and digitized images based on photographs and other primary source documents. There are also name indexes to series within the county archives; a photographic exhibit with narrative information entitled the “75th Anniversary Celebration of the Bronx River Parkway Reservation 1925-2000”; and articles posted on a monthly basis that illustrate the scope of the archives and the use of its collections. Each article includes photograph images of primary source documents relating to the subject presented in the article. This exhibit follows the format of a newsletter.

In summary, the majority of the government agencies within the Southeastern Region have not undertaken digitization projects. The very few who have considered digitizing portions of their holdings have expressed concerns about digitization as a long-term storage medium and even as an effective access tool. Specifically, they cited prohibitive labor and technology costs, maintaining intellectual control over their collections, media long-term sustainability, and selecting items for digitization as major reasons for caution. As a group, and at least in the short term, they would prefer that digitization projects focus on archival finding aids, indexes, and other metadata as opposed to the digitization of archival materials from their collections. The overriding message that comes across is the feeling that digitizing images for online access provides complete access to small number of documents, while posting indexes, descriptions, and detailed finding aids online provide partial access to a large amount of primary sources. This second approach is the better one for unique materials, the governments argue, for reasons of cost effectiveness and project longevity, since it avoids the need for sustained intense maintenance obligations.

2. Academic Libraries and Archives

The Southeastern Region maintains no major research center on the level of Cornell, New York Public Library, Columbia University, or the Rochester Public Library, but does boast several mid-size colleges and universities of some significance. These include Vassar College, Marist College, Bard College, Mount St. Mary’s College, the State University of New York at New Paltz, the United States Military Academy at West Point, and the Culinary Institute of America, in addition to seven community colleges. Of all of the academic libraries, only Marist College, SUNY New Paltz, and West Point have undertaken digitization projects of any significance, although Vassar College is considering the idea as well.

The largest digitization initiative within the Southeastern Region is the digital library at **The James A. Cannavino Library at Marist College** (<http://library.marist.edu/diglib/lib.html>), which consists of Marist's Electronic Reserve Room, an archive supporting specific courses taught at Marist College, and proprietary databases and electronic journals. Of particular interest to SENYLRC are two digital collections posted online through partnerships between Marist and the **FDR Library** and the **Hudson River Environmental Society**. The FDR site contains digitized images of correspondence, reports, and other records from several series of Roosevelt's Presidential Subject Files. There is some semblance of a finding aid to the collection, but it does not follow the standard format. Instead, it contains only some series descriptions and background historical information. This site was designed primarily for use by students studying history and political science at Marist. The site for the Hudson River Environmental Society includes reports, diagrams, and other records kept and used by the Society, but the content of this page is largely comprised of links to external sites and not digitized primary documents.

The **West Point Cadet Library** has also begun to digitize portions of their collections for online publication. In selecting collections for digitization, they explored a multi-faceted approach, which involved issues of preservation, improved access, donor relations, and outreach as well as content. Items currently displayed on their website in digitized format include photographs, institutional publications, and manuscript materials. Originally, they offered to digitize items for patrons upon a "request only" basis, but discontinued the policy due to the increased demands placed on the library staff. They also related a number of difficulties that they encountered during the digitization process, specifically in the areas of security, issues of copyright and insurance, linking bibliographic records to the scanned images, and choosing and managing the technologies. They also claimed that some of the most significant difficulties occurred during the preparation of the archival items for digitization and during the indexing process. This difficulty was particularly apparent when preparing to digitize manuscript materials that contained marginalia, crossed-out passages, subsequent additions to the text, and misspellings.

The **Sojourner Truth Library (STL) at SUNY New Paltz** has recently undertaken a project to digitize photographs and postcards from its archives. This project is funded by a NYLA grant, which allowed STL to hire a processing assistant to scan and create the bibliographic records for the images. STL claims that the strength of the archives at STL lies heavily with photographic images rather than with manuscript and print materials. In selecting the photographs for scanning, STL cited both access and preservation as important factors to their criteria. The main users of the archival and photographic collections at STL include the college's foundation and other administrative agencies, which use the images in publications. In a recent interview, STL librarian Christopher Raab stated that the function of the digitized images largely respond to PR needs, and the desire of the library to continually "look current," citing pressure from top level administration and outside funding sources. In looking to the future, the library may digitize some of the heavily used administrative records from the collection, such as meeting minutes and presidential reports. In this type of project, Raab emphasized that he would be in effect creating online artificial collections while attempting to maintain the original order of the physical records at the repository. Raab's main concerns about STL's digitization efforts lie in the area of maintaining intellectual control over the library's collections made available online, specifically in relation to issues of copyright and publication.

The Special Collections Department at **Vassar College** has not undertaken any digitization projects other than posting a few finding aids online. Department Head Ron Patkus stressed that they were in the early stages of development in this area, but would be interested in pursuing digitization in the future. He also

expressed enthusiasm for SENYLRC's efforts to build a regional plan and would be very interested in participating in such a project. He said that he would prefer to pursue digitization projects that play a part in a larger regional plan rather than undertake digitization projects independently.

All of the academic libraries expressed the view that the major incentives for them to digitize involved public relations, competitiveness, and pressure from top management and outside funding agencies. Despite these pressures, however, they all still seek to establish high standards in relation to the selection of materials for digitization, citing their desire to use digitization as a preservation tool in addition to a forum for increased access to the collections. They are all moving to forge ahead with their plans, although they expressed concerns about issues of sustainability, intellectual control, technology, and prohibitive costs. These libraries all expressed a desire to work with SENYLRC to develop a digitization plan for the region, and to work with each other to develop standards, guidelines, and training materials to be used all regional repositories undertaking digitization initiatives.

The message expressed by the academic libraries provides an interesting contrast to the message of the government agencies. There is more enthusiasm for digitization projects, although they share some of the same concerns. The academic libraries are driven to digitize largely for reasons of competitiveness and public relations, which are not major concerns of the government agencies. Furthermore, there is a sense of adventure and exploration among the academic libraries that is largely missing from the more conservative government agencies. And, as the academic libraries seek to provide more and more information and attractions to their student, faculty, and alumni bodies, they are continually looking to digitization and other electronic means to do so. In most cases, they already maintain sophisticated infrastructures of technology equipment and personnel, and simply find it easier to adapt their systems to the digital environment. However, the academic libraries also understand the risks involved in implementing digitization projects, and have already encountered technical problems and difficulties arising from issues of intellectual property and copyright. Thus, they are moving ahead with both large- and small-scale projects, but cautiously and carefully, in order to avoid more pitfalls, and to take advantage of the exploratory efforts of other larger academic libraries.

3. Public Libraries

The Southeastern Region contains 143 public libraries and two major library systems, the Mid-Hudson Library System (MHLS) the Ramapo-Catskill Library System (RCLS). Many of the public libraries within the Southeastern region maintain in their holdings small collections of mixed materials relating to local history. These collections often house archival materials such as photographs, family papers, newspapers, and business records, reference sources such as books and pamphlets on local history, and sometimes even object collections as well. These collections are typically not organized, described, or cataloged according to standard archival practices, but rather are managed by a combination of library cataloging, or by a system involving some form of subject arrangement. These collections, although usually small in scope and often not given top priority by library staff and administration (many such collections are managed largely by library volunteers), do provide a valuable resource for documenting the history of each library's specific locale. The large majority of these libraries have not undertaken digitization projects, but many have expressed interest in digitizing items from their collections in the future, in some cases even before full inventories or catalogs are completed. The public library community as a whole is very excited about the prospect of making their unique collections more available to the public through the use of digitization technologies, but recognizes that it faces major

obstacles in regard to technological expertise, lack of comprehensive inventories, and inadequate staffing and funding necessary to undertake digitization projects.

Perhaps the most significant digitization initiative undertaken by a public library in the region is a project spearheaded by the **Newburgh Free Library** (NFL), which is the central library for the Ramapo-Catskill Library System. Mary McTamaney, librarian for the NFL, is working on a digitization project funded by a DEC grant. NFL's Hudson River Resource Center project is in its first year, and members of the NFL staff were recently given hope by the DEC that its proposal for a second year will be approved as well. The goal of this project is to create an online system of “coordinated collection development” throughout the region that can be used by reference librarians and patrons alike to answer questions about the Hudson River and its surrounding areas. This system could then function as a “ready reference” website comprised of images, databases, indexes, collection descriptions, and links to other sites devoted to the Hudson River.

The project originated at NFL because of its position as the central reference library in the Ramapo-Catskill Library System. As a central reference library, it receives a large number of inquiries regarding the Hudson River that cannot be answered at the smaller local libraries. NFL has yet to develop a solid focus or selection criteria for information to be added to the Hudson River Resource Center site, but believes that they may “specialize” in subjects such as history and environmental issues as they relate to the Hudson River. In pursuing this project, NFL has encountered difficulties on several points, namely in the technical and political areas. In pursuing this project, Newburgh has encountered some difficulties, particularly in finding the right web expertise and software advice. Since they intend to describe and sometimes present digital images for materials in neighboring collections, they need a good data base cataloging product which is searchable by the public online.

The contents of the digitized portion of the website hosted by the **Desmond-Fish Library** in Garrison, NY (www.hhr.highlands.com/) consist of text documents, scanned images, school curricula, bibliographies, and links to other sites, chiefly relating to the Hudson River. The items selected for inclusion to this online resource passed a number of criteria. First, the library staff preferred to choose materials that were easily identified as being in the public domain, as stipulated by the recent copyright law. In selecting materials in the public domain, the library staff sought to digitize information from sources published prior to 1923. Also, the library staff favored the selection of rare items from their collections for digitization for the purpose of providing greater access to largely inaccessible materials. And lastly, like the Newburgh Free Library, the Desmond-Fish Library chose the Hudson River as the chief area of focus for its online offerings. The library staff explained that the Hudson River provides a great central topic, since it allows for broader coverage into areas such as ethnic groups, industrialization, environmental issues, the Revolutionary War, and other historic subject matter.

Currently, the Desmond-Fish Library hosts on its website a copy of a panoramic 19th-century depiction of the length of the Hudson River from New York Harbor to the Adirondack Mountains. This image, taken from the book *Panorama of the Hudson River*, by engraver William Wade (1846) depicts in intricate detail both shores of the Hudson, including major tributaries, mountains, and falls; factories, mills and boatyards; towns, lighthouses and stately private residences. Accompanying each image is text taken from Wade's book and other sources relating to the history of the sites detailed in the drawings. “By scanning the images onto the web, the Desmond-Fish Library has now made the images accessible to students and scholars of the Hudson River. The Virtual Trip on the Historic Hudson River gives a close up look at the panorama with explanations of each of the ‘points of interest’ delineated by Wade along the way. Because

this area is so rich in history and continues today to be a vital center of industry, tourism and environmental and historic restoration, the site provides links to these other aspects of the historic Hudson River not mentioned in Wade's panorama. The user can examine one town or historic site from the 1846 panorama and even before and follow that town's development through the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries” (www.hhr.highlands.com).

Another addition to the site includes approximately 35 images of notable paintings done by the 19th century Hudson River School artists such as E.C. Coates, F.E. Church, and R.W. Wier. These digitized images constitute a very small portion of a larger collection of slides of over 1,000 paintings by the Hudson River School that are kept by various repositories throughout the region. The original projects to photograph the paintings and create slides for them were completed in 1990. The collection of slides is currently held at the library and is accessible via a Microsoft Access database. Further, since the library holds archival master copies of the slides in addition to reference copies, it is possible for users within the region to borrow slides through the interlibrary loan program. The library staff noted that the site receives a remarkable amount of attention from the academic and local communities and is very interested in digitizing more images from the collection and exploring the possibility of posting the database on the website as well. The funding for the website was made possible by The Friends of the Desmond-Fish Library, The Hudson River Foundation and The Desmond-Fish Library.

Another digitization initiative in the region has been undertaken by the local history department of the **Middletown Thrall Library** (www.thrall.org). As part of this project, the library has posted on its website digitized images of a couple of books containing information about the history of the city, a city directory, a report conducted by a graduate student about the library, and a postcard collection. This is a very low key digitization initiative without a thorough planning document.

As a general statement, it can be said that the public library community (including the library systems) is enthusiastic about digitization, and in many cases already maintains a certain degree of expertise in the areas of cataloging, collaboration, indexing, and maintaining shared databases. However, they are not rushing ahead with large-scale digitization projects, largely because of the prohibitive costs, staff time and technical difficulties involved in such projects. None of the libraries maintain the capacity to host technology for a regional digital archive, but the Newburgh Free Library and the Desmond-Fish Library may be able to take the lead in future projects involving smaller local libraries.

4. Private Organizations: Historical Societies, schools, churches and religious organizations, businesses, not-for-profit groups, State Historic Sites, etc.

The picture of digitization of private organizations and state historic sites in the region is the most incomplete and complex out of the four repositories groupings. The large majority of these organizations are small and under-funded, or have very limited collection management programs. None have undertaken serious digitization initiatives, and all are struggling to gain adequate intellectual and physical control over their various collections, which often include historic materials in multiple formats, including object collections, archival collections, artwork, and institutional records. In a significant number of these repositories, a curator or director of the organization is responsible for all of the institution's collections. Very few of these organizations employ professional or full-time collection managers, and even the few professionally trained collection managers are often burdened with other responsibilities such as giving tours, fundraising, and working public programs in addition to overseeing the management of their collections. Thus, the private sphere should not be looked to for guidance or leadership, but rather as the

lesser partners in collaborative arrangements. Many of these institutions have much to gain from involvement in such projects, however, the least of which includes the possibility for grant funding to gain control of collections and prepare them for digitization. However, larger institutions may also benefit from developing mentoring relationships with these smaller institutions. It is possible that the arrangement, rehousing, cataloging, and digitization of selected collections from the smaller private repositories may help enhance digital collection of larger institutions in the region, as well as provide much needed exposure and professionalization of the smaller institutions.

In one electronic library project undertaken in the region, the **Huguenot Historical Society** (HHS) in New Paltz recently posted descriptive information about its entire archival holdings on its website (www.hhs-newpaltz.org). The website contains finding aids and brief descriptions about collections of personal and family papers; local government, business and church records; genealogical and military records; photographs; rare and old books; and maps and architectural drawings relating to life in and around New Paltz, NY from the 17th to the 20th centuries. The online data describes the provenance, scope, and content, as well as accessibility, of the Historical Society's many archival collections. The finding aids and descriptions are posted on the website in HTML format, although HHS understands that EAD is a more effective and accepted format within the archival community. Other than these finding aids, HHS has not planned to undertake any major digitization project in the near future, but would participate in a regional or otherwise collaborative initiative if it is well-planned and well-funded. HHS does not maintain the capacity to host technology for a large-scale regional digital archive and has no plan to digitize actual primary sources from its collection for online use.

The **Dutchess County Historical Society** (DCHS) recently applied for a grant from the New York State Council of the Arts (NYSCA) to digitize over 50,000 images from its collections, including photographs, slides, paintings, etchings, and other visual materials. NYSCA did not award the grant, however, claiming that the project was too large to be manageable. DCHS hopes to use digitization as an exhibition tool since it holds very little space that can be used for physical exhibits or for research. For DCHS, digitization is attractive as a way to provide access to materials that are difficult to access physically. A different approach was taken by the **Columbia County Historical Society**, whose board shows a general reluctance to undertake any significant digitization projects, citing reasons of shortages of adequate staffing, prohibitive costs, lack of experience and technological expertise, and intellectual property issues. However, through the diligent efforts of one dedicated volunteer, the Society did allow the volunteer to post an index to cemetery records on a private website that includes a link to the Society's webpage containing their reproduction policy and fee structure. From this page, researchers can locate specific records of interest and order reproductions at a specific cost. The curator of the Society, Helen McLallen, stated that this resource has been lucrative for the Society, allowing them with the dual opportunity to raise money while providing enhanced access to its collections, all with only a minimal impact upon the Society's limited staffing resources.

Several other private organizations have undertaken very small digitization initiatives: the Friars of the Atonement Archives/Records Center, the Trolley Museum of New York, the Minisink Valley Historical Society, the Shaker Museum and Library of Old Chatham, Stony Point Battlefield State Historic Site, and the Bardavon Opera House of Poughkeepsie. Following a similar path as the Huguenot Historical Society, the **Friars of the Atonement Archives/Records Center** in Garrison has posted on their website (<http://graymoorarc.org/>) a list of record groups of its institutional records. Apparently, a significant portion of their archives are arranged and described according to standard archival practices, but no attempt has been made to digitize any of them. The **Trolley Museum of New York** in Kingston

maintains on its webpage (<http://www.mhrcc.org/tmny/>) a listing of subject headings of its photograph collections with selected images online chiefly relating to trolleys and other late 19th century transportation issues. This is an extremely simple design with no attempt to conform to archival or digitization standards. The websites of the three other organizations contain several images of maps, postcards and photographs, collection pieces, as well as a few basic descriptions of their holdings. The website of the **Shaker Museum and Library** is of interest because it includes images from its object collections in addition to print and photographic items. The **Mohonk Mountain House**, a historic resort hotel on the National Register in New Paltz, maintains an archives but expressed that they are not interested in any digitization efforts. Archivist Joan LaChance insisted that Mohonk was a private organization that uses their collections chiefly for their own marketing and administrative uses. In statements that were very similar to those made by the Town of Olive, she expressed a significant amount of wariness regarding digitization citing reasons of prohibitive costs and time commitments, issues of intellectual property rights, and problems of obsolescence.

The digitization efforts of private organizations reveal a variety of approaches and attitudes towards the use of the technology in terms of collections management and access. The overall sense is one of wariness and unreadiness in terms of resources, funding, and expertise. The museum/historical society community in particular lacks sufficient technological resources and expertise in most aspects of its operations above and beyond collection management, and although appreciative of the possibilities offered by digitization technologies, have actively approached the matter very cautiously. For most of these groups, there are good reasons for caution. With limited staffing and funding resources, the lack of technology savvy among collection managers, and most importantly, the lack of intellectual control over their collections, this community needs outside help with more basic levels of collection management more than opportunities to provide hi-tech access through digitization. However, well-planned collaborative digitization projects may in fact be what is needed to propel the recordkeeping programs of these organizations forward, provided their limitations and needs are fully understood and taken into account.

In assessing the entire region, it is possible to make note of several general characteristics. First, most of the repositories in the region have not undertaken digitization projects, and although appreciative of its possibilities, are generally wary of moving too quickly with large-scale projects. Among the small number of repositories that have experimented with digitization, the large majority of these efforts have been small-scale and non-collaborative, that is, undertaken singly by one repository without cooperation from other repositories. The three or four projects that were done in collaboration grew out of other projects or were undertaken out of a desire to take advantage of previously existing relationships. Additionally, the attitudes and approaches toward digitization can largely be described in terms of repository-types, with marked differences noticeable between government agencies, academic libraries, public libraries, and private organizations, although some exceptions are evident. Lastly, the past and current projects in the region exhibit a variety of different approaches, processes, and subject matter, with no single initiative yet proving to be the dominant model for the region.

III. A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF COLLABORATIVE DIGITIZATION PROGRAMS OUTSIDE THE SOUTHEASTERN REGION

A brief review of several projects outside of the Southeastern region serves to identify some of the issues, problems, and approaches that have been discovered by other groups and place the SENYLRC initiative within the larger context of the world of electronic libraries. This section gives a brief overview of seven collaborative grant-funded digitization initiatives in an effort to glean information that may be relevant to the current effort undertaken by SENYLRC. Other projects are also alluded to on occasion. Although the types of projects selected for review vary according to size, approach, and funding levels, the projects here are all collaborative projects at the state-level or smaller. The focus here is to study digitization efforts projects that either 1) make use of collections held in similar types of repositories found in the Southeastern region (i.e. small public libraries, historical societies and museums, mid-size academic libraries, and municipal governments), or 2) are statewide programs with which SENYLRC may collaborate in the future.

Rochester Regional Library Council (<http://www.rrlc.org/>)

In 1998, the Rochester Regional Library Council (RRLC) received a LSTA planning grant for the purpose of undertaking a regional project to digitize collections related to women's suffrage. The objectives of the project were to develop a unified plan for the region, to create an awareness of the complexity of issues surrounding the development and maintenance of unique digital collections, and to promote the use of this digital collection.

The project serves as an online informative exhibit relating to the Women's Suffrage Movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The website consists of biographies of prominent suffragists and scanned images of documents and photographs associated with them. There is also a timeline of the movement. The project's coordinators acknowledge that the target audience of this exhibit is school children and teachers at the primary and secondary levels. In choosing a narrow subject area and limited focus, they were able to avoid a number of the more difficult problems associated with selection, bibliographic control, and the level of organizations and descriptions of collections from different repositories. The repositories submitted documents to the project for scanning and received acknowledgment for their submissions in the form of citations. This exhibit does not serve as a serious scholarly resource, but it is an example of a successful, completed digitization project, that provides online information in relation to the unique history of the region.

What is interesting about this approach is its ability to draw and use images from repositories throughout their region regardless of the level of arrangement, description, or cataloging of the items. It provides a method for smaller, lesser-known repositories to participate in a collaborative project without mandating that they develop their own in-house expertise in regard to digitization. In effect, the repositories "loan" their images to a larger group, who develops an online display of items around the central theme, in this case, women's suffrage. Of course, pursuance of this type of project assumes that the library council itself has developed the necessary expertise, funding, and facilities involved in large-scale digitization projects.

Rochester Images (<http://www.rochester.lib.ny.us/rochimag/about.html>)

Another project in the Rochester area is worthy of mention here. The *Rochester Images* project began in 1997 when the Rochester Public Library (RPL) and Monroe County received an LSTA grant to investigate the digitization of local history images. From 1998 – 2001, additional grant funding from four sources, LSTA, RBDB, IMLS, and SARA “allowed for the scanning of several thousand images and the seed money to begin electronic conversion of catalog information for these images and the continued growth of Rochester’s digitization program.” (“Project Background.” *Dialogues on Digitization: A Basic Forum for Library Administrators & Trustees*. Unpublished Report, March 2001.)

Rochester Images is currently involved in a four-way collaborative project involving collections, services and activities of five separate regional entities. The project plans to provide a 19,000 item digitized database of photographs from several regional libraries, repositories, museums, and government agencies that is accessible through the Monroe County Library System’s web-enabled catalog. This database will be used by local school districts seeking to develop State-mandated curriculum involving primary source documents. The Library also seeks to digitize postcard collections and local history publications, conduct inventories of records stored in municipal archives, create and mount indexes for other local collections, develop facilities to digitize large-format materials such as newspapers and maps, and to contract technical and professional services to local school districts and municipalities.

In an article published in *Computers in Libraries* in 2001, RPL’s associate director Rodney Perry details some of the lessons learned during the frenetic process of large-scale digitization efforts. He argues that “it is all right to dive in,” suggesting that it “validates an attitude of conceptual boldness that looks for new and better ways to do things, and looks for new opportunity in nontraditional areas.” Even more important is the necessity of convincing the top management of any institution of the need to turn a project into a program and integrating digitization into existing budgeting and administrative structures, which will serve to ensure the longevity of such efforts after the initial enthusiasm has died away (Perry, Rodney. “A Collaborative Journey.” *Computers in Libraries*, January 2001: pp. 36-43).

Central New York Library Resources Council (<http://www.clrc.org/>)

The Central New York Library Resources Council (CLRC) took a different approach to developing a regional digitization initiative. As part of a two-year LSTA grant-funded project, CLRC digitized images from collections of unique materials from three regional repositories that provided an important resource for a local history or geography interest. During the first phase of this project, CLRC held eight focus group studies to elicit the participation of CLRC members and other potential users in the planning process for CLRCNET, an Internet home page that makes use of the SiteSearch software. The study focused on finding ways to augment and improve the search capabilities of the SiteSearch software.

The focus groups brought together 90 volunteers from regional libraries, historical societies, schools, colleges, governments, and other repositories for the purpose of increasing CLRC’s service to its membership through a region-wide digitization initiative. During the focus group meetings, the participants voiced their opinions that CLRC could best serve its membership through the provision of online forms, digitized collections, technical assistance, help with copyright issues, and of publicity for member collections. The focus groups also identified potential user groups that CLRC should target when selecting collections and developing the interface portion of the site. Specifically, the focus groups recommended that CLRC initially create four CLRCNET databases, but they noted that more databases could be added in response to future needs. The first four databases centered on four specific areas:

Catalogs and Special Collections, Local History, Health Information, and Genealogy, although several other areas were identified for future databases. Some of these areas included businesses, tourism, newspapers, education, science and ecology, the arts, and maps. The criteria for selecting information to be added to CLRCNET included an emphasis on information unique to Central New York, no copyright or proprietary restrictions, willingness of repository to participate, and suitable format of the information.

In putting together the databases, the focus groups identified 173 specific resources for inclusion in the initial CLRCNET databases. This list served as the basis for selecting specific collections for digitization the following year. Of interest to SENYLRC, the four databases created by CLRC provide similar information to the contents of the *Directory of Historical Records Repositories* compiled by SENYLRC. CLRC simply fleshed out the collection descriptions and added a fairly sophisticated search engine to the design.

The discussions of the focus groups allowed CLRC to draw two main conclusions. First, through digitization efforts and advisory services, CLRC can provide improved services to its members, which in turn will provide improved member service to the public. In providing improved services to its members, CLRC would post its institutional forms on its website; help repositories digitize special collections to be included on CLRCNET; and provide advisory and technical assistance in regard to copyright issues, legislative action, and grant funding. The member libraries would also train users how to use one search engine to access all of this information. The focus groups also expressed interest in cost savings resulting from centralization of commercial databases, and saved time as a result of simpler search methods.

During the second year of the project, CLRC invited three repositories from the list it had compiled in the previous year to participate in a digitization project. These three repositories, the Jervis Public Library, Rome Historical Society, and Onondaga Historical Association maintain collections of unique materials that CLRC felt provided a useful resource for studying the history of the region. CLRC prepared letters of agreement, which stipulated that the repositories would allow CLRC to store the images on its server. CLRC staff emphasized that they intended their project to be an enticement for users to go to the repository to use the items, not as a replacement for the physical collection. Towards this end, they only digitized selected items from the collections, rather than digitize the collections in their entirety. Since this was the case, the level of organization and description of the items was not a major consideration for CLRC's project, although they would be added to the selection criteria in future digitization projects. CLRC staff mentioned that the descriptions and local cataloging records for the collections varied widely.

Thus, CLRC assumed the role of providing a centralized administrative body for digitization within the region, and managed a pilot project using selected collections from regional repositories. CLRC developed its own scanning facility offered storage space for the digitized collections on its own server and altogether became the major force of digitization within their region with the exception of the region's major research center at Syracuse University. Unlike the project undertaken by the Rochester Council, Central's approach is generally more collection-oriented rather than theme-oriented. Where the Women's Suffrage project targets a specific audience and uses materials drawn from a large number of repositories to document a narrow subject area, the CLRC project targets a wider audience and provides access to materials drawn from fewer collections and repositories. The Rochester project is an online exhibit. Central's project is a collection research tool.

Rediscovering New York

(<http://www.sara.nysed.gov/services/programs/rediscovering/rediscoveringv2.htm>)

The *Rediscovering New York History* web site, created by the New York State Archives attempts to provide online links to every heritage institution in the state. The site delivers online services, access to primary materials, and information about institutions, collections and events. From the website, researchers can search the *Historic Documents Inventory*, which holds descriptive information about historical records located in over 1500 historical societies, libraries, museums, archives, and other organizations around New York.

There is also a directory of repositories, which provides contact information and website links for historical societies, non-profit organizations, schools, government, corporate archives, museums, libraries, universities and colleges, religious organizations, and other repositories. The website provides browsing capacities for selected broad subject areas such as ethnic groups, agriculture, business and labor, community history, genealogy, health, military, gay & lesbian, women's issues, environment, transportation, etc. This feature gives brief descriptions and links to sites holding finding aids and indexes, digitized collections and exhibits, current documentation projects, online publications, and statistical and narrative information. Also available on the *Rediscovering* website are moderated discussion groups, classroom curricula and other educational resources, and information about history conferences, workshops, new exhibits, and other public programs.

The Making of New York

(<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/nycrl/mainpage.htm>)

In 1996, New York State's eleven comprehensive research libraries (NYCRL) received from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation a grant of \$50,000 to plan for the creation of a New York State Digital Library, which would consist of electronic resources including published and unpublished materials contained in the state's libraries, archives, and other cultural institutions. Their plan is to create a digital library that "will not be 'owned' by any particular institution but will represent the creation of a new library, one that is a consolidation of unique resources from the 11 research libraries and one which ultimately can include resources from any library in the state." Their target audience includes researchers of all types and levels, including children, businessmen, students, genealogists, and professionals. The major components of their plan involves the identification of ongoing digitization efforts among their population, identification of collections and establishing criteria and parameters for selection, securing institutional commitments, identification and selection of appropriate technologies, and acquiring the necessary funding to support their implementation initiative. Since 1996, *The Making of New York* initiative has drafted a mission statement and established its priorities, goals, and objectives; developed a legislative strategy and proposal; created a website; identified appropriate standards and technologies for use during implementation; have set criteria for the selection of collections for digitization; have made site visits to all participating players; drafted a digitization plan; and have secured legislative support.

The planning documents of the project provide much information that is of interest to SENYLRC, specifically in regard to problems arising from large-scale collaborative efforts. The plan lists several issues that have frustrated the achievement of their goal, such as "conflicting institutional priorities, competition for scarce funding, and a focus on issues rather than content for the digital library." The report claims that conflicting institutional priorities is one of the biggest detriments in achieving consensus. For example, much like the academic libraries within the Southeastern region, the report notes

that several NYCRL libraries are “heavily invested in creating their own digital resources to meet a specific institutional concern,” or are committed to create specific thematic-based virtual library projects with libraries outside of New York.

Other statements from the planning document and final report are also of interest to SENYLRC. One of these statements involves the impact of digitization upon the libraries’ workloads. The authors of the reports argue that the impact of digitization on cataloging, indexing, reference, and technological resources is almost always underestimated and can raise many serious problems for participating libraries. The authors also stress the need for a diversified approach to digitization, since the wide variety of collections and institutional practices tend to frustrate implementation projects approaching digitization from only one angle. The authors also mention that efforts to form mentoring relationships between partners, develop digitization manuals, and increasing Information Literacy in school and college curricula all serve to increase the efficacy of digitization of library and archival materials.

Publication of Archival, Library and Museum Materials (Florida)

(<http://susdl.fcla.edu/>)

Publication of Archival, Library and Museum Materials (PALMM) is a cooperative initiative of the State University System (SUS) of Florida to provide digital access to source materials held within the state’s library and archival community. PALMM projects involve both single-institution projects and collaborative efforts between multiple institutions. The goal of the PALMM initiative is to create high-quality virtual collections relevant to the students, research community and general citizenry of Florida. To date, PALMM has undertaken two major digitization projects, the Florida Heritage Collection and Linking Florida’s Natural Heritage (LFNH).

The Florida Heritage Collection (<http://susdl.fcla.edu/fh/>) is an ongoing cooperative project of the State University System (SUS) of Florida to digitize and provide online access to materials broadly representing Florida’s history, culture, arts, literature, sciences and social sciences. **Thematic areas** in this growing collection include Native American and minority populations, exploration and development, tourism, the natural environment, and regional interests. Materials are taken from archives, special collections, and libraries of the ten state universities that make up the SUS. The project is supported through a central fund created by the directors of the SUS libraries. Most funds are redistributed to libraries to reimburse the direct costs of digitizing Florida Heritage materials. A small percentage is allocated for graphics design, historical consulting, and other professional services. The cost of selection, cataloging, and other support activities are borne by the individual libraries. Image storage and website maintenance are provided by FCLA. Fiscal management is provided through the Florida Center for Library Automation. Ongoing project oversight is provided by the Digitization Services Planning Committee, a standing committee of the SUS libraries.

(<http://www.fcla.edu/FCLAinfo/digit/PALMMplan.html>)

Participating libraries select materials for inclusion in the Florida Heritage Collection and contribute catalog records for the digitized version to a central database. The libraries perform or outsource the digitization and create files of structural metadata describing the relation of images to logical parts of the resource. The structural metadata record and the set of images for each resource is transmitted to FCLA, where the data is loaded into a DB2 application on a central Unix server. Identifiers which serve the function of persistent URLs pointing to the DB2 application are inserted into the catalog records, which

are used for name and topical access to the electronic resources. Another PALMM project, Linking Florida's Natural Heritage: Science and Citizenry (LFNH) (<http://susdl.fcla.edu/lfnh/>) is a project funded by IMLS to create a virtual library of Florida ecological information held in the state's scientific libraries, including specimen databases, library catalogs, scientific texts, and other citation databases for taxonomic and topical information.

An important planning document generated by PALMM is the *Publication of Archival, Library, and Museum Materials: A Three-Year Plan for Development and Coordination*, which was authored by its Digitization Services Committee, a task force of the Technical Services Planning Committee of the SUS libraries. This document sets forth the most important planning information for both the *Florida Heritage Project* and *Linking Florida's Natural Heritage* projects, as well as another project entitled *Reclaiming the Everglade*. The report also lists a number of other subject areas and collections sighted for further digitization initiatives. These subject areas and collections were identified for their ability to document issues of particular importance to the people of Florida, even though some of the subjects extend beyond the geographic region of the state. These areas identified in the report include literature and authors from Florida, prominent politicians from Florida, prominent ethnic groups and minority groups, newspapers, theater collections, religious collections, and architecture and landscape design.

The report identifies a number of potential roadblocks, pitfalls and problems inherent to the digitization process. Specifically, the committee argues that repositories need to move beyond self-funding digitization projects and urges every institution, whether individually or partnered, to seek grant funding to showcase materials of particular research merit and proven use within the State of Florida. However, the committee acknowledges that a grant orientation has two disadvantages. First, they argue, "it encourages an approach to digitization that is more opportunistic than programmatic. Projects are skewed towards attracting funding rather than supporting the instructional and research goals of the institution. Second, it postpones the prioritization and integration of digitization services in the normal operating budget of the institution. Therefore the longer-term goal should be to leverage the experience gained and infrastructure developed through grant-funded initiatives in developing a rational, sustainable program of local digitization internally funded according to the priorities of the SUS and the individual institutions within it."

The report also notes several other issues that need to be addressed when planning digitization projects. First, partnerships should be encouraged, since digital resources created by one institution undoubtedly will become a resource for other institutions. Also, the report also emphasizes the challenges of digitizing primary sources from archival collections with regard to arrangement and description. The committee specifically calls attention to the problem of creating artificial online collections and reordering documents from special collections, and the added question of whether to digitize finding aids to collections in addition to items from the collections.

Colorado Heritage (<http://coloradodigital.coalition.org/cdp.html>)

The Colorado Digitization Project began in 1998 and was funded through a Colorado State Library Services and Technology Act grant. The first year's initiatives focused on exploring the current digitization activities around the state, development of a collaborative initiative, development of standards and guidelines to facilitate digitization, and testing of these collaboratively based initiatives through a pilot project. During the first year, the project established five working groups. These groups involved individuals from archives, museums, libraries and historical societies. Over the period of 10 months they

created guidelines for metadata, standards for scanning, and a collection development policy. A website, was made available in January, 1999 and since that time has had 117,800 visits from 37 countries. Currently there are 19 digital collections linked through the CDP website, with information on 25 planned projects. Resources were assembled to assist library and museum staff planning digitization projects and to assist schoolteachers in using digital resources. The pilot project, developed in cooperation with the Colorado Endowment for the Humanities and Dr. Dean Saitta, University of Denver, involved the digitization of materials relating to the Colorado Coal Field Wars.

To initiate the collaborative effort, the Colorado State Library received a \$71,000 LSTA grant, which was used to bring together partners needed for the collaborative initiative, to identify ongoing and planned digitization initiatives, develop guidelines for digitization projects, and to conduct a pilot project, and identified future funding options. The CDP subsequently received a number of other grants which enabled it to establish four regional scan centers; provide digitization training for Colorado archivists, librarians, and curators; created a union catalog of metadata; provided support for 20 - 25 collaborative digitization initiatives; and ultimately create 50,000 new digital images.

The project's website is the focal point of the project. It brings together the existing Colorado digital collections, links to related national collections, provides those interested in digitization information on scanning, creation of metadata, legal issues, etc., and provides a vehicle for distributing the strategic plan, guidelines developed by the Project participants, and general updates on the project. The website also exists as a virtual collection of Colorado's unique resources and special collections.

The project was designed to create an open, distributed, publicly accessible digital library that documents crucial information for the residents of Colorado through the establishment of a collaborative structure among the state's libraries, museums, high schools and other organizations. This group works to establish criteria and standards to guide the selection of materials for inclusion in the digital library; to demonstrate the value of libraries and museums and their important contribution to the state's economic development; and to assist repositories in digitizing materials and managing digital objects.

The project team has identified five governing principles to guide them as they work with local libraries and museums. The principles welcome open participation from all information organizations within the state, allows for the broad interpretation of subject matter, allows for the digitization of information existing in a variety of formats, and bases its development on the use of advances in digital and telecommunications technology. Lastly, the project team argues for a mixed administrative approach that mandates that libraries and museums will support their own servers, but provides a single point of entry for the user.

The Colorado Digitization Project Plan, presented in September, 1999 provides the project's mission and vision statements, its goals, and specific activities identified for the purpose of achieving those goals. In this plan, the CDP planners argue that collaboration among repositories throughout the state is the key to its success. Through using the Internet, the CDP can bring these geographically dispersed collections together into a single virtual collection. A variety of working groups, that include representation from different constituents, has directed the efforts of the CDP. The Steering Committee is responsible for the general oversight of the grant and project implementation. The Metadata working group reviews the options for the description of digital resources and developing guidelines for metadata to be used by project participants. The Museum working group advises on the unique requirements of museums, historical societies, and archives on the collaborative initiative, and the Scanning Centers Working Group

assist in identifying and developing guidelines for scanning that can be used by project participants through CDP Scan Centers. Another working group, the Selection/Collection Development working group assists in developing guidelines for the virtual collection.

In conclusion, the review of the planning documents and websites these digitization projects provide SENYLRC with the opportunity to gain an understanding of some of the issues, problems, and keys to success involved in developing and maintaining a geographically-based collaborative digitization initiative. The planners of these projects agree on many issues. They argue that collaborative projects do yield successful digitization efforts and provide the ability for libraries to better serve their communities through making their collections available in search-able online formats. They have all provided the impetus for collaboration, and have worked to develop online institutional forms and training manuals, and have provided assistance in the areas of technology, metadata, legal and intellectual property issues, publicity, advocacy and legislative lobbying efforts, and funding. They call for a diversified approach to digitization that allows for flexibility in relation to cataloging and description standards. They argue for the need to pursue grant funding for projects, but not to rely on grant funding completely. They note that it is important for libraries other repositories to make long-term institutional commitments to ensure the longevity of their digitized collections and the need to change mindset about digitization among top management from that of temporary projects to permanent and ongoing programs. It is also necessary find the right balance between institutional priorities with the priorities of the grant funding agencies in order to build a sustainable digitization program that is most appropriate to the participating institutions. However, problems such as conflicting institutional priorities and rivalries, competition for scarce funding, and even professional insecurities can all serve to frustrate even the most well-planned and well-intentioned collaborative projects.

IV. MOVING AHEAD: DEVELOPING THE SENYLRC DIGITIZATION PLAN

1. The Regional Digital Advisory Task Force

One result of the interviews and the planning process has been the formation of the Regional Digitization Advisory Task Force, which is comprised of information professionals from the region's repositories. This task force will be the guiding force for digitization development within the region and will need to make crucial decisions at the outset of the planning process. The following discussion attempts to define the issues and difficulties that the task force must solve if a workable collaborative digital library is to be created.

2. SENYLRC's Role

When asked about the role that SENYLRC should play in a region-wide digitization initiative, the interview participants expressed that they are looking to SENYLRC to focus its efforts on two major areas of activity: Guidance and Consultation, and Coordination and Communication. All individuals interviewed shared the opinion that SENYLRC should focus more on providing support to repositories undertaking digitization projects rather than to engage itself in implementation. In contrast to the efforts of other 3R councils such as Rochester and Central, it is recommended that SENYLRC, at least at the outset, should maintain a narrow, well-defined role focused on research, training and coordination, and long-term planning rather than the more involved approach of implementation.

Guidance and Consultation

Libraries, museums, archives, local governments, and other repositories in the region interested in digitizing their collections encounter many obstacles. These obstacles range from choosing appropriate software and hardware, to selecting items for digitization, acquiring funding, locating and understanding professional standards, copyright, insurance and other issues of intellectual property law. There are also often larger problems resulting from the lack of adequate planning, hasty decision-making, or even unrealistic deadlines that serve to frustrate even digitization projects, even if such projects are well-funded. Acting in concert, SENYLRC and the Regional Digital Advisory Task Force (RDATF) are in an excellent position to provide the guidance to repositories looking to digitize materials from its collections. SENYLRC can provide such guidance by maintaining expertise in the subject and by referring the repositories to information sources that it reviews, acquires, and makes available to its member libraries. SENYLRC can also host workshops and produce pamphlets and manuals that provide direct information and training to regional repositories.

Coordination and Communication

In addition to providing guidance, the interview participants also stated that SENYLRC and the RDATF are well positioned to serve the region in a coordinating or communicative capacity. SENYLRC, through the RDATF, can serve as a central administrative body that establishes relationships with appropriate equipment vendors and service agencies that offer cost effective scanning, imaging and indexing products and services. In the long-term, SENYLRC may also look to host and maintain an online directory and interface or web ring of digitized collections in the region. SENYLRC may also work with DHP, SARA, or other groups, to outline subject and thematic areas that should be priorities for digitization initiatives

within the region. Lastly, in conjunction with these other groups, SENYLRC can help repositories in acquire the necessary funds for digitization projects through the appropriate state, federal, and private grant funding agencies working in the area of digitization.

3. Project Models

In its 2001 LSTA grant proposal, SENYLRC identified as its goal, a “regional digitizing program which will provide access to targeted primary source materials defining this regional identity and be available through a regional portal or gateway accessible via the Internet in concert with Southeastern’s Virtual Union Catalog.” Looking ahead, it is possible to identify as the long-term goal of this project to be the development of a website which will allow users to search a database of collection descriptions, finding aids, inventories, bibliographic records and other metadata which are linked to digitized images from collections from libraries, archives, museums, and other repositories in the region. Also search-able from this database would be subject-oriented exhibits containing specific images drawn from various collections for their ability to express specific regional themes.

There are many different ways to achieve this goal, and already there have been numerous approaches to digitization projects undertaken all throughout the country. The following models are given for the purpose of providing different approaches to digitizing library and archival materials within the Southeastern region. Each of the models has been designed with a certain amount of flexibility in mind. They can be done exclusively by one repository, or be done by several repositories working in collaboration. They are also designed to encourage exploration of different models simultaneously, or even successively.

- **Subject (or theme) - oriented online exhibits:** Databases based on this model include digitized images from collections along with narrative text and other graphic data. These “online exhibits” would serve the same purpose exhibits of physical objects in galleries and historic spaces: to inform, educate, and entertain through visual representation. Two good examples of online exhibits include the “Winning the Vote” concerning the Women’s Suffrage Movement on the website of the Rochester Regional Library Council, (<http://www.rrlc.org/>) and the “75th Anniversary Celebration of the Bronx River Parkway Reservation 1925-2000” on the website of the Westchester County Archives, (<http://www.co.westchester.ny.us/wcarchives/>).
- **Descriptive Bibliographic Information Databases** consist of searchable databases containing exclusively finding aids, inventories, box and container lists, and other cataloging records that provide access to collections of historical materials, whether they be in print, photographic, electronic, or museum object format. This model requires flexibility in order to allow for the variety of cataloging and descriptive practices used throughout the region. A notable project of this type is the *Berkeley Finding Aid Project* (an initiative to collect and integrate archival finding aids from repositories in California into a shared database available via the Internet. Regionally, the Huguenot Historical Society has gone the furthest in this particular direction, although they are not the only one.
- **Database of scanned images of collections in their entirety:** This model requires searchable indexes and appropriate, often sophisticated metadata for each individual project. There are two different variants to this approach:

- *Item-based collections* – This model is used for collections of items of similar format such as photographs and postcards, sheet music, paged books, object collections, maps, audio or visual recordings, artificial collections, etc. This is the easier of the two types, since the format of all of the items to digitize is more or less identical, requiring less sophistication and complexity in the compilation of accompanying metadata.
- *Mixed Collections* – This model is used for collections of personal and family papers, business and organizational records, other collections containing materials of different types and formats. The metadata for this model often includes complex finding aids with varying degrees of descriptive narrative that is typically more difficult to index than the metadata used with item-based collections.
- **Database of scanned images selected from specific collections:** In this model, collection managers select representative samples from specific collections to be digitized and posted online. Finding aids or other relevant metadata for the collections should be included as well as metadata for the digitized objects.

4. Areas of Focus

In addition to the project models, SENYLRC will need to develop its plan of work from the outset if it is to continue to receive state funding and ensure the continue momentum of this initiative. Below are eight areas of focus that SENYLRC and the RDATAF should address in its early planning process. These concerns are very similar to those found during the focus groups held by the Central Library Resource Council during their planning process in 1998 and 1999.

Establish Standards for Technology and Metadata

One of the main tasks of the committee will be to establish standards for technology and metadata to be used throughout the region. Out of necessity, the committee should be advised that such standards will need to be flexible to account for a variety of different cataloging practices used throughout the region, and the fact that the large majority of the repositories have little or no formal archival or curatorial programs. It is imperative that this task receives top priority, as many of the other tasks are dependent upon the development of these standards. The subcommittee will need to address the following questions early on in its work. What will the standards for metadata and digitization technologies be for the region? How will these standards allow for the flexibility necessary to include items from collections organized, cataloged, and described by different methods and systems? To what detail should these standards be taken? Will only image resolution and cataloging standards be identified, or will equipment and even vendors be specified as well.

Establish Policies for Intellectual Property Rights

The committee will need to establish policies and guides governing the protection of intellectual property rights for repositories making their collections available in digitized format. Once policies are specified, this information will need to be made available to repositories.

Provide Training and Information

The committee will need to focus its early efforts on providing training and information to repositories about digitization in the forms of training manuals, information packets, workshops, forums, and

conferences. All the individuals that were interviewed expressed that SENYLRC and the RDATAF, at least initially, should primarily focus on providing training and researching and disseminating information to regional repositories in relation to digitization. The committee will need to identify the areas of focus for such projects and then plan and undertake such initiatives. Items of discussion should include intellectual property rights and copyright law, technology standards, metadata standards, project planning, and indexing.

Establish Regional Scan Centers and Host Sites

The committee will need to address the question of whether it should establish **scan centers and host sites** in the region, and if so, how many, and where these will be. A decentralized approach is advised, at least in the short term, but any planning should take into account the possibility of centralization in the future. Further, it will be necessary to outline the responsibilities of both the host site and SENYLRC in the development of these scan centers, specifically in legal and financial terms, as well as project implementation and planning. At this stage, it is difficult to determine which libraries would be willing and able to become host sites. Marist College is the most obvious choice, given its past accomplishments in digitization. Other likely possibilities include the County Archives, some of which (such as Ulster) already maintain microfilming laboratories; the academic libraries of Vassar College, West Point Military Academy, and SUNY New Paltz; and Newburgh Free Academy. However, SENYLRC should not discount the possibility of developing a relationship with a private vendor as a scan center. The Hudson Valley is home to Hudson Microimaging, who does maintain high production scanning and microfilming facilities that may be utilized for region-wide projects. Furthermore, Hudson Microimaging does boast a respectable reputation for preservation-oriented projects. One employee of this firm, Linda S. Snyder, is a member of the Documentary Heritage Program Advisory Committee and recently worked with Rockland and Orange Counties to develop their *Guide to the Archives of Orange and Rockland Counties and the Towns of Ramapo and Warwick*.

Long-term Planning

Another important aspect of developing a regional digitization plan will entail planning for the longevity of digital libraries, and preparing for the continual maintenance of technologies and media, funding sources, and cooperation between players. This subject has been addressed recently by the Rochester Public Library, who in planning for the continued management of their successful digitization efforts, are now shifting the mindset among its board and staff from one of project management to a paradigm of program management. Rochester stresses the idea that projects are viewed as finite, with a clear end in sight, while programs are ongoing, requiring continual staffing, management, evaluation, and funding. Rochester argues quite convincingly that digitization projects will be short-lived if they are not taken seriously by top management of host institutions and integrated into their yearly budget and work plans.

Identify Broad Subject Areas

SENYLRC should identify Broad Subject Areas that can be used to organize the website and when planning digitization initiatives. These broad subject areas can be used by the committee on which to focus its resources or to encourage repositories, either acting singly or in collaboration with other repositories, to undertake specific project initiatives. For example, the committee could designate one subject to focus on for a specific period of time, during which time various repositories and collaborative projects could initiate digitization projects of any or several of the various types mentioned above within the designated subject area. SENYLRC could then work with the various groups to secure grant funding and provide guidance in relation to project planning and management. At the same time, other groups would not be discouraged from pursuing projects focusing on different subjects. The region already has a

list of broad subject areas that was developed during the compilation of the directory of *Historical Records Repositories of Southeastern New York* in 1999, although the committee may choose to alter this list or to develop its one of its own. The list of subjects used in the directory are: African-American, Agriculture, Arts and Architecture, Business/Industry/Manufacturing, Civil War, Education, Environmental affairs/natural resources, Ethnic Groups (specified), Genealogy, Labor, Local history (specified), Medicine and health care, Military, Native Americans, Politics/law/government, Religion, Revolutionary War, Science and technology, Social service/charitable organizations, Transportation and Communication, and Women.

Encourage Mentoring Relationships

The committee should encourage mentoring relationships by identifying repositories with well-established digitization or archival programs that can take the lead in digitization projects. These mentors would be the key players in the region, initiating digitization projects, both singly and in collaboration with other repositories in the region. They could also give training workshops, host panel discussions and forums, and provide other forms of assistance to smaller repositories with less experience in digitization and archival management. Some of the major players in the region that can be identified immediately for such roles include the Rockland County Archives, Marist College, Vassar College, SUNY New Paltz, and the Newburgh Free Library. Other repositories that may be able to become mentors in the mid-term include the Desmond Fish Library, the Huguenot Historical Society, the Rockland County Historical Society and the Putnam County Archives. It is important to note here that out of the many possible partnerships that could be formed within the region, SENYLRC should specifically encourage a partnership between Marist College and the Newburgh Free Academy, since they are both the furthest along in their digitization projects, and more importantly, are working directly in similar subject areas.

Define its Relationship to Digitization Initiatives Outside the Region

The committee will also need to define its relationship to other digitization initiatives undertaken throughout the state. Specifically, will SENYLRC attempt to develop standards that are compatible with standards developed by other 3R councils and the State Archives, or will it pursue a more isolated and localized approach?

5. Concerns and Potential Roadblocks

Initially, SENYLRC will have to overcome a number of difficulties in order to achieve its goals. These difficulties largely stem from the diversity and lack of standardization among the region's repositories, and the scattered demographic makeup of the region, which lacks any major cities or large research libraries from which other similar projects were able to draw funding, expertise, and leadership.

Lack of Standard Collection Management Practices

The library and archival community in the region expressed their feelings that digitization should be used primarily for the purpose of making unique materials more accessible to users. However, most repositories in the region maintain very little control over their unique collections, whether they are archival materials, photographic materials, or museum objects. Even the more prestigious repositories in the area are still struggling to organize and describe their collections according to standard practices, and are largely unequipped to move ahead with major digitization projects. And with few exceptions, the smaller repositories, whether they are local history collections in public libraries, historical societies, museums, or cultural organizations, often have even fewer resources to work with than the larger organizations, and maintain even less intellectual and physical control over their collections.

Lack of an Established Large-scale Scanning Program

There are very few repositories in the region with the facilities to maintain a large-scale scanning program that could undertake major digitization projects. At present, the James A. Cannavino Library at Marist College stands alone as the only repository with the likelihood of becoming a centralized digitization lab for the region. It might be necessary to develop an arrangement with a private firm, such as the Hudson Microimaging Company, who is known for their preservation microfilming and scanning facilities.

The Difficulty of Achieving Consensus

The makeup of the region is diverse and establishing consensus among the various libraries, archives, museum, governments and cultural organizations may prove to be difficult to achieve, particularly in relation to setting the pace and overall development of digitization efforts in the region.

The Lack of Trained Information Professionals Available for Project Work

SENYLRC must recognize the difficulty in finding consultants and skilled paraprofessionals to work on digitization projects. The region appears to suffer from a shortage of skilled archivists and library professionals willing to undertake project-oriented work, even at wages well within professionally accepted salary ranges. SENYLRC will need to find ways to attract skilled workers if any serious collaborative digitization projects are to be undertaken.

The Lack of a Significant Research Library

Lastly, the lack of a major, well-funded research library in the region will make it difficult to identify an organization to take the lead in digitization projects. This will probably result in a number of smaller digitization projects as opposed to fewer projects operating on a larger scale. Although there are some benefits to this approach, it does make administration and implementation more difficult.

V. CONCLUSION

Developing a region-wide collaborative program for the Mid-Hudson Valley provides a unique opportunity to unite libraries, archives, museums, government agencies, historical societies, and other cultural organizations behind a common goal. A project of this size presents many challenges, however, and will be important for organizations to balance the need to pursue their individual institutional priorities with the need to align with other organizations with different needs, goals, and commitments. This is particularly important in cases where current digitization projects are already under way. Standards will have to be followed by all participating institutions, even if defined loosely. Some organizations may have to temporarily slow down current projects in order to compensate. On the flip side, other organizations may need to move ahead with digitization projects more quickly than originally planned in order to take advantage of the resources offered by cooperative ventures. Despite the desire of all participants to develop a flexible system of standards, goals, and approaches, some sacrifices will need to be made if a fully operational digital library is to be realized.

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