

Should we digitize? Can we digitize?

Case Study Discussion Activity

Digital Stewardship Curriculum

Read through the digitization project scenario below. Then discuss each factor relating to the questions: Should We Digitize and Can We Digitize? If helpful, you can adapt and rewrite this content to fit your own situation to complete a more relevant discussion activity with your team. This activity should be completed *after* reading the SHN resource Digitization Project Decision-Making: Should We Digitize? Can We Digitize?

Institutional Profile:

Your department is the new Archives Department within the Tribal Historic Preservation Office. Your department's mission is to gather and create historical and educational materials for the tribe's language, culture, and history and to preserve and provide access to these materials in person and online.

Staff:

You are a staff of one person, and there is no possibility of hiring permanent or temporary employees. You do have the option to hire two Tribal College interns for three months over the summer. You need to commit at least 40% of your time to administrative, archives management, and grant writing duties. That means in a typical work week, you might have two days to focus on digitization projects.

Funding:

Your salary is funded by the tribe. You can request limited funds for archives supplies and digitization equipment from your department, based on need. Your limited funding for new digitization projects (including outsourcing) and other initiatives comes from grant proposals. This year, you have received a \$10,000 grant, which you used for training and equipment for photograph digitization, digital preservation training, and to purchase storage media for digital files.

Equipment:

In addition to two office computers and backup storage, you have one high quality photo scanner, computer, and photo editing software set up at a workstation.

Digitization Project Description:

Your archives has a collection of 125 photographic prints and negatives in good condition that are portraits of basket makers, beaders, and artists in your community during an annual arts celebration about 26 years ago.

Also included in this collection are 30 audio cassette tapes recording artists speaking about their art, inspiration, and related stories. You have gone through and listened to these recordings with the Traditions and Culture Committee, and have determined that a small number of these recordings are culturally sensitive because they discuss aspects of culture and ceremonies that are not shared with people who are not part of the tribe. They decided that all cassettes should be digitized and preserved, and the culturally sensitive flagged ones only shared with the community, while the rest can have a wider audience. You do not currently have equipment to digitize these audio cassettes at a good enough archival quality at your institution, and have never digitized audio before.

This collection was donated to the Tribal Historic Preservation Office by the photographer, who is a tribal member who has since passed away. This collection was accepted by the THPO before you started as Archivist, and there is not much descriptive information that came along with it. There has been a lot of interest in the photos from descendants of the artists and general tribal membership, and you would like to digitize and share these photographs on the tribal website with a selection of the audio. The collection, however, only includes release forms from about half of the individuals who were photographed and interviewed.

Since the 30th annual arts celebration is coming up in a few years, you would like to launch a digital collection in time for that celebration. Currently, you only have an informational page on the tribal website. So to provide access to materials, you would need to use or create some kind of database or website to display the materials.

Discussion Questions

As you discuss these questions, you can refer back to the information found on the first two pages. There may be gaps in information, since this is a hypothetical scenario, try filling them in with examples from your own institution as needed.

Should we digitize?

- Does the project align with department goals?
- Is the scope of this project realistic in relationship to staff, resources, time, and budget?
- What are the outcomes of this project?
- What are the benefits of the project?
- What are some possible risks or sensitive issues in completing the project?

Can we Digitize?

- Can you meet the timeline for the project? If not, is there a timeline you can suggest? Can you break up the project into multiple stages?
- What staff are available for this project? Are they sufficient?
- What costs will you need to consider?
- What additional equipment and software might be needed? Will you need to outsource any digitization to an outside vendor?
- Are there any permissions or access restrictions that should be considered?
- Are there any copyright concerns for sharing the materials?
- How will you provide access to the materials?
- What considerations should be made for the long-term preservation of the digital media created?

After discussing these questions, would you proceed with this digitization project? Try listing the pros and cons of starting the project and discuss more.