

LARGE-SCALE DIGITIZATION: A TRLN AGENDA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

May 29, 2008

The digital age offers the ability to extend TRLN's historic success in cooperative print collection development and joint licensing of electronic resources. Undertaking large-scale digitization of library and archival materials requires major investments in funding and staff resources. While some of these investments, such as selection, preparation, and re-shelving of materials, must take place at and be borne by each institution, others could be more profitably shared across participating libraries. This white paper outlines the guiding principles, goals, and potential plans of action for collaborative digitization activity and related development of discovery tools for digitized content in TRLN. It will also serve as a framework to evaluate potential institutional and commercial partnerships, and to pursue funding opportunities.

TRLN's goals include a commitment to explore open retrieval and delivery mechanisms for digitized content, provide cataloging and metadata, develop best practices for workflow and processing, and to agree on common standards. TRLN members are also committing to shared access of digitized content within the consortium – as seamlessly as possible to the TRLN patron and independent of individual authentication systems.

Benefits to collaboration on large-scale digitization – including advancement of both print and digital preservation efforts, the increased prestige of our collections considered collectively, and the economies of development of the digital collections infrastructure -- outweigh the potential barriers we face. The most likely barrier – an inconsistent commitment of resources from member institutions – is best addressed by engaging potential funding partners, including internal university and external granting, corporate, and non-profit organizations. This white paper, long-standing successful cooperative commitments and work, and the vision for “Digital TRLN” will help in deploying this important strategic step.

Significant projects highlighted for consideration in this paper include exploration of formats for digitization other than the bound volume, such as manuscripts and other archival material and microfilm; and collectively exploring strategies for clearing rights issues related to orphan works. A brief analysis of the orphan works issues and a potential workflow for published and unpublished works is included in this paper.

Finally, the paper includes a report on the digitization efforts at TRLN member campuses, as well as a review of major large-scale digitization projects, including Google Book Search and the Open Content Alliance.