A Digital Library for the Middle East

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The UCLA Digital Library Program (DLP) serves as the catalyst for the creation, management, and delivery of digital content in support of the UCLA Library mission and goals. The program provides for the storage and dissemination of digital objects, including text, images, audio, and video in their various digital manifestations and combinations. The UCLA Library provides a Web presence for digital collections, as well as storage, backup, and digital preservation support for all digital content accepted into or developed by the Library.

UCLA Library Criteria for Digital Projects

The Library has adopted these criteria as an aid in evaluating whether projects will be a good return on investment and to help in establishing a strong rationale when requesting support from internal or external sources.

The criteria are designed to assess the strengths and weaknesses and promote an analytical approach, but they do not have equal weight, and not all may be relevant to any given project.

- The project provides significant support for UCLA research and instruction.
- There are faculty and Library advocates for the project.
- The project's intrinsic value will ensure long-term use by a significant audience within and/or beyond the UCLA community.
- The project can be completed with available funding or has the potential to generate funding through grants, donors, or other external fund sources.
- The project will strengthen or enhance an existing California Digital Library (CDL) or UCLA resource, become part of an important virtual collection, or support a national initiative such as those sponsored by the Association of Research Libraries and the Digital Library Federation.
- UCLA has intellectual property rights to the content and can manage any required restrictions to access or can realistically solve any rights issues.
- The project falls within traditional areas of library service or moves those services into a direction consonant with the Library's strategic directions.
- The project advances sustainable models for scholarly publishing.
- The project brings credit to UCLA Library in a manner likely to generate further digital library projects and funding.
- The project has local or regional importance and represents an effort only UCLA can initiate.
- The project is reasonable, practical, and achievable.

➢ The project saves money in the long term by eliminating the need to acquire resources or by freeing up staff time.
➢ The project creates or sustains a partnership that the Library will find valuable for future development.
➢ There is a compelling argument for digitizing material that is deteriorating.
➢ The project will expand the Library's technical infrastructure or contribute to the development of national digital library standards.

UCLA Digital Library Project Services

Project Planning. Digital Library Program staff provides assistance in planning and management of digital projects. Staff works with faculty and various campus organizations to create digital collections to support both teaching and research. Staff can provide advice during the development of grant applications. Areas of expertise include digitization standards, digitization costs, digitization methods, metadata standards, rights management, and usability issues.

Project Management. One of the keys to a successful project is strong project management. Once a digital project has been approved and funded, the DLP staff can work with the project team to assure proper management. The staff is experienced with the hiring and training of employees, establishing workflow and procedures, quality control, and budget management.

Production Partners. To achieve high standards of digital image production, the program works in partnership with its two main suppliers of scanning and photographic services: the Southern Regional Library Facility and UCLA Photographic Services.

Digital Preservation and Access. The program provides backup and digital preservation support for all its collections. Digital master files are stored in their original, uncompressed format and can be made Web accessible. Backup services are provided by Library Information Technology. In addition, the Library is working with the CDL's Digital Preservation Program to provide for long-term preservation of the UCLA Library's digital assets. The Digital Preservation Repository provides two distinct services: preservation of the metadata and digital files in the form in which they were initially deposited (i.e. "preserving the bits"); and, for digital objects that conform to internationally accepted digital standards, the migration of those objects (both metadata and digital files) to new standards and formats as they emerge and are adopted over time. All locally created content falls into this latter category, ensuring not only that the digital objects will survive into the foreseeable future, but that they will continue to function as standards and software evolve.

The UCLA Digital Library of the Middle East: Collections and Services

As part of its strategy of building its collection of Middle Eastern resources, the UCLA Library is developing several digital collection components within the Digital Library Program of interest to this conference. The importance of identifying significant collections that an institution might contribute toward a Digital Library of the Middle East cannot be underestimated. All partners must bring both expertise and content to the table to make

such a library successful. On behalf of UCLA, the Library can offer several existing collections and potential collections to be considered.

Near Eastern Manuscripts in the Charles E. Young Department of Special Collections
http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/special/scweb/area.htm#ne

Collections supporting Near Eastern studies include approximately fifteen thousand manuscripts, with catalogs, in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, primarily in the fields of literature, philology, theology, law, and history, and ranging from the eleventh through the nineteenth centuries. Among its treasures are the collection of Dr. Caro Minasian, a collection of Armenian religious manuscripts dating from the fourteenth century and gathered in Isfahan between about 1930 and 1960, and the Aintabi Collection, which originated in Aleppo and contains many unique Arabic texts little-known to scholars. The department also holds rare printed materials related to the study of Near Eastern civilizations, including fine-press editions and translations of the Persian poet-philosopher Omar Khayyam, limited-edition facsimiles of illuminated Arabic manuscripts, and historical editions and versions in European languages of the *Arabian Tales of the 1001 Nights*. In addition, UCLA Library houses an outstanding collection of travel books from the nineteenth century and more than two thousand nineteenth and early twentieth-century photographs, many by Francis Frith, of people and places in Egypt, Israel, Iran, Istanbul, and the Levant.

Collection 1047: Minasian Collection
The Minasian Collection of Persian and Arabic Manuscripts consists of works related to the studies of theologians and scholars in centers of learning in Iran from the fourteenth through the nineteenth centuries. The manuscripts, which include both bound collections and single works, shed light on the social, religious, and political history of Iran and Shi'ism, and on the development of Persian culture during the period and reveal what was taught and studied in schools, including commentaries on classical texts in mathematics, astronomy, and logic.

The collection is one of the most significant of the Near Eastern manuscript collections held by the UCLA Library. The creation of an online inventory, which is phase one of a project to provide access to this important collection. Phase two, for which funds are being sought from the National Endowment for the Humanities, will create a detailed online finding aid for the entire collection of 1497 manuscripts; catalog records for individual manuscripts; digital versions of 320 manuscripts selected by expert scholars; and tools for the retrieval, display and editing of data in both Roman and non-Roman alphabets. Phase three, for which future funding will be sought, will digitize the remainder of the collection and add collaborative online research tools.
Website: http://digital.library.ucla.edu/minasian

Collection 896: Ottoman Turkish Manuscripts
The department also contains several Ottoman Turkish collections, dating principally from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and written mostly in Anatolian cities. Initial analysis undertaken by two specialists in Ottoman history and culture reveals that these works constitute an invaluable record of efforts to disseminate theological and cultural

information in Turkish to a non-scholarly audience unable to read Arabic. Work to create records for the collection is well advanced, and a selection of notable texts for digitization has been made.

Cataloging and Metadata Services

In addition to UCLA collections, the Library will also contribute cataloging and metadata services, facilitating access to the Digital Library of the Middle East. The metadata capture titles and other significant textual information in the vernacular (Arabic, Turkish, and Persian) and are displayable on the Web. The final application will also allow for searching in the vernacular as well as the ability to store digital objects with commentary in a "virtual collections" tool. These annotations can be for the contributor's own use, for instruction and sharing with students or for communication with other scholars or the general public. It is the UCLA Library's intention to build an environment that is equally accessible and functional for scholars and students working in either Roman or non-Roman scripts.

Web Gateway: Web Sites rich in Middle Eastern Resources
The UCLA Library can also offer important Web services, which connect users to resources and specialists. Several valuable resources have been created through the efforts of David Hirsch, librarian for Middle Eastern studies at the UCLA Library, by also serving as gateways to the resources; they offer an enhanced service to speed users to materials of interest. They include:

➢ Bibliographic Access to Periodical Publications of Middle Eastern Groups in Eastern Europe: a bibliography of recent acquisitions in the UCLA Charles E. Young Research Library
http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/yrl/colls/mideast/europubs.htm

➢ Bibliographic Access to Periodical Publications of Middle Eastern Groups in Australia : a bibliography of recent acquisitions in the UCLA Charles E. Young Research Library
http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/yrl/colls/mideast/aussiepubs.htm

➢ Arab-American Press Project
http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/yrl/colls/mideast/pages/aapp.htm

Potential Collections for Digitization
➢ Collection 359: Collection of Middle Eastern Posters, 1990-
Online finding aid available at:
http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt500023n3

➢ Collection 454: Iraq Out-of-Country Voting Program Ephemera and Posters, 2004-05
Online finding aid available at:
http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt3g5011kr

Digital Publication Partnership
UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology (UEE)
Willeke Wendrich, Editor-in-Chief
http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/UEE/

The UEE will be an online scholarly publication with contributions from experts worldwide. The intention is that it will become the standard source in its field, replacing existing printed sources. The UCLA Digital Library Program will house the non-textual content (photographs, maps, other images, and video) and the CDL eScholarship Repository will host the text content (articles). Access to these materials will be free to the world. However, there will also be an access application that will provide searching, linking and other innovative services, using the DLP as the back-end repository. As with all UCLA Library digital collections, the DLP will also provide digital preservation services for the project via the CDL Digital Preservation Repository.

The advantages of online publishing are obvious. It is no longer as costly to produce a new edition, because single encyclopedia entries that are in need of revision can be updated whenever necessary. Through rigorous version control and the continued availability of older versions of an entry, the articles can be cited as similar to printed versions are. To ensure the highest academic quality, all articles incorporated in the UEE will be peer reviewed and published through the University of California online publishing Web site, the CDL eScholarship Repository under the title: UEE Open Version.

A key feature of this project is its innovative approach to data access by making use of hypermedia. Hypermedia provides opportunities for the linking of information in ways not otherwise possible, enabling it to be seen in new ways and facilitating the creation of new knowledge. Online media provide opportunities that are not available in printed versions. Innovative search functions and data mining that make use of textual, pictorial and, in future, audiovisual formats have an important heuristic function that far supersedes that of searches in printed volumes. Rather than only presenting a conveniently accessible body of excellent content, the UEE will ultimately open up new research methods through combining and interweaving the knowledge of eminent scholars with original data in completely new ways.

Furthermore, the UEE will solicit constant feed back from its users, which will allow continuing development through their comments and suggestions as well as through increased technological possibilities. In addition, the UEE will provide links to current high-quality Egyptological content on the Web with annotated summaries that clarify the strengths and weaknesses of the pages, according to criteria provided by a panel of scholars.

For further information about the UEE:
- ➢ CDL Repository site: http://repositories.cdlib.org/nelc/uee/
- ➢ UCLA Today article about Willeke:
  http://www.today.ucla.edu/2005/050628people_egyptian.html

Summary and Recommendations

The UCLA Library is interested in and willing to participate in the next steps to be taken to create a true Digital Library for the Middle East. Such a resource only strengthens the programs in Middle Eastern studies here at UCLA and the support for study and research by a growing cohort of international and American students. As the library continues to build extensive and deep collections, its staff can contribute cataloging and metadata services that facilitate access to those collections and Web services that connect users to resources and specialists.

➢ Fundamental to this initiative's success is the need to establish clear standards for bibliographic access. There is a need for uniformity in bibliographic format, access points, name authorities, Romanization and use of subject headings.

➢ OCR technology for Arabic and Persian printed materials has improved greatly but is still not sufficient to enable searching without human review of all digitized texts.

➢ A coordinated plan for preservation of unique collections at different institutions throughout the world should be developed. One institution might have runs of rare Arabic newspapers, another Arabic lithographs, and so forth. Priority could be given to those materials facing impending disintegration, in order to preserve their intellectual content.

➢ As the UCLA Library is making an effort to digitize Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish manuscripts, it is interested in joining with others in creating a virtual union catalog of digital Middle Eastern manuscripts.

➢ The UCLA Library can provide training and orientation opportunities where appropriate for staff who are able to visit the offices of its Digital Library Program.