# Digital Commonwealth Collection Development Policy

## Mission

Digital Commonwealth is a non-profit collaborative organization focused on providing access to the rich variety of materials held by Massachusetts libraries, museums, historical societies, archives, and other cultural-heritage organizations. It provides resources and services to support the creation, management, and dissemination of digital surrogates of cultural-heritage materials housed in Massachusetts repositories, which will support Digital Commonwealth's goal of making such materials widely available online.

## Background

The Digital Commonwealth has a strong partnership with the Boston Public Library, which provides free digitization services as part of its Library for the Commonwealth program. These services were originally supported with federal funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) through a grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC).

Digital Commonwealth is pleased to offer these free digitization services as a product of the strong partnership between these two institutions. Through this partnership, these organizations work together toward a shared goal of creating, maintaining, and expanding a successful and thriving statewide system that provides access to Massachusetts's digitized collections.

The Digital Commonwealth repository provides access to thousands of images, documents, and sound recordings that have been digitized through the Boston Public Library digitization program as well as by contributing institutions so that they may be available to researchers, students, and the general public. This repository also serves as the on-ramp to the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA). In its role as a DPLA service hub, Digital Commonwealth metadata is harvested into DPLA so that the materials may become available nationally and globally.

## Audience

The audience for this collection-development policy includes managers at cultural-heritage organizations as well as any institution that might want to contribute to Digital Commonwealth. It also might be of general interest to the community at large. This collection-development policy serves to assure consistency not only about what is considered within the scope of the Digital Commonwealth project but also what is out of scope. It provides general guidelines to help future and potential contributing institutions evaluate the materials in their collections for possible contribution.

Many contributing institutions will have reporting responsibility to state, municipal, or other local authorities (boards of trustees, etc.). This collection-development policy should help to clarify the aims of the Digital Commonwealth for these parties.

The audience for the Digital Commonwealth repository includes the entire community of potential users and is intended to be exceptionally broad. Institutions that contribute to Digital Commonwealth represent a wide range of cultural-heritage organizations and the materials that are contributed might be of interest to anyone with access to online resources. Materials could be utilized for many purposes, especially those that include research, education, and recreational interests. Although much of the material in Digital Commonwealth might be focused on the cultural heritage of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and greater New England, its contents are likely to be of interest far beyond Massachusetts' borders—both nationally and internationally. The materials in Digital Commonwealth are intended to present our rich and diverse cultural heritage to the world.

## Scope

The primary aim of Digital Commonwealth is to provide access to cultural-heritage materials that would otherwise remain hidden or obscure. It aims to develop a digital collection that is both broad and deep; one that allows the disparate physical collections of many libraries and other institutions to reinforce each other. In this way, it hopes to create a more powerful tool for research than would be possible in a purely analog environment. Digital Commonwealth does not discriminate by format, genre, or subject matter and exclusions rest primarily on practical and technical grounds rather than philosophical or aesthetic ones. Determination of fitness for digitization and/or inclusion in the repository will be left to the contributing institution's judgement, except in the specific cases listed below.

Digital Commonwealth will not accept any material that cannot be made available for viewing by the public. Reasons for access restrictions include copyright restrictions, privacy concerns, or a desire to charge for access. Materials with these or any other access restrictions, including watermarking or other system-based barrier (for example, a firewall), will not be held in the repository or harvested.

Access in the digital world must be defined broadly. Mere presence in the Digital Commonwealth repository is not sufficient to provide access. Materials must have enough associated descriptive metadata to allow for discoverability and to contextualize them. Concretely, this generally means a properly formatted title (that is, a title that follows suggestions set forth in a content standard), a reasonably specific date range, and subject-based access points. However, each collection has different needs, and proper levels of description will be determined on a case-by-case basis. A statement regarding the copyright status of each object and a licensing statement describing allowed uses for the material are also required. Staff from Boston Public Library will work with each contributing institution to ensure the optimum use of existing description and to assist in the creation of new descriptive metadata as necessary. Suggestions of good content and structure standards may be found in the *Best Practices* section of this document.

Some material formats, while theoretically welcome in Digital Commonwealth, have specific description or user-interface needs that may be impossible to accommodate in the current version of the repository. These formats will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by staff from Boston Public Library, and accepted if possible. Potential problem formats include finding aids, newspapers, and vital records.

Another class of materials cannot be digitized through the Boston Public Library digitization program but can still be housed in the Digital Commonwealth repository. This class includes materials that have been digitized by another source, or materials that are pulled in from a contributing institution through harvesting. Here, material formats include, but are not limited to, microforms, roll film, audio, and video.

Other material formats—including dynamic websites, twitter feeds, video games, or other examples of modern digital assets—cannot currently be represented in Digital Commonwealth. If, and when, the technical capacities of the repository expand, these materials will be reconsidered for inclusion.

For now, Digital Commonwealth is not currently collecting scholarly research and/or electronic theses and dissertations. This decision may be revisited as the repository grows, as this policy is under active review.

## Participation

Participation in Digital Commonwealth actively and directly contributes to the creation of a shared cultural-heritage resource. It also provides contributing institutions with easy access to their digital materials and makes those materials equally accessible to their patrons and the community at large. By adding materials to Digital Commonwealth, contributing institutions also agree to have them added to DPLA.

Any institution holding materials of cultural, historical, or artistic value may request that those materials be included in Digital Commonwealth. Personal collections not owned by a cultural-heritage organization will not be accepted.

## Priorities

Each contributing institution is asked to determine those materials from its collection that are relevant for inclusion in the Digital Commonwealth repository. Materials that are to be hosted in Digital Commonwealth will be digitized and ingested according to the needs of the collection, as well as the availability of librarians and photographers to do any necessary work. In addition, priority will be given to materials or collections that are not otherwise available online. Materials that are to be harvested into Digital Commonwealth will be ingested on a first-come, first-served basis as soon as developers are available to do the work. Collections will be reharvested upon request.

# Best Practices

Digital Commonwealth does not require the use of any specific standards for metadata or imaging. The quality of Digital Commonwealth as a tool for researchers depends on the quality of the metadata and images of the materials contained within it. Therefore, the use of formal cataloging rules, also known as content standards, is strongly recommended, where applicable, to provide specific guidance on the choice and format of data. The content standard chosen for each project should be appropriate for the contributing institution and for the type of material(s) being described.

Whenever possible, choose a single standard and use it consistently for all records. Some commonly used standards include:

- DCRM(G): Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Graphics)
- Other volumes in the Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (DCRM) series
- Resource Description & Access (RDA)
- Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS)
- Cataloging Cultural Objects (CCO)
- Descriptive cataloging of ancient, medieval, renaissance, and early-modern manuscripts (AMREMM)
- Graphic Materials: Rules for Describing Original Items and Historical Collections (GIHC)
- Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, 2nd edition (AACR2)

The use of controlled vocabularies for subject headings, personal and corporate names, creator roles, format/genre terms, geographic entities, and languages is also strongly recommend. Use of controlled vocabularies facilitates browsing, enhances searching, ensures data consistency, and facilitates sharing of records with other institutions. When a choice among vocabularies is available, use the vocabulary most appropriate to the contributing institution and for the type of material(s) being described. Recommended controlled vocabularies include but are not limited to (except as noted):

### Subject/Format Headings

- Library of Congress Thesaurus for Graphic Materials (TGM)
- Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH)
- Getty Research Institute Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT)
- FAST (Faceted Application of Subject Terminology)

### Authorized Name Headings/Creator Roles

- Library of Congress Name Authority File (NAF)
- Getty Research Institute Union List of Artist Names (ULAN)
- VIAF: The Virtual International Authority File
- MARC Code List for Relators *(this is the ONLY allowed vocabulary for roles)*

**Geographic Headings**

- [Getty Research Institute Thesaurus of Geographic Names (TGN)](#)
- [GeoNames](#)
- [MARC List for Countries](#) *(typically used for fixed field coding)*
- [MARC List for Geographic Areas](#) *(typically used for fixed field coding)*
- [Library of Congress Name Authority File (NAF)](#) *(geographics)*

**Languages**

- [ISO 639-2: Codes for the Representation of Names of Languages](#) *(this is the ONLY allowed vocabulary for languages)*

Finally, Digital Commonwealth strongly recommends that any imaging be done according to the *[Federal Agencies Digitization Guidelines Initiative](#)* (FADGI) "Technical Guidelines for Digitizing Cultural Heritage Materials." The Boston Public Library imaging facilities conform as closely as possible to this standard. For digital materials not created through the Boston Public Library digitization program, any image or other digital object determined to be of sufficient clarity and quality to be used for research purposes could be included in the Digital Commonwealth repository.

Boston Public Library staff will do any necessary metadata crosswalking and/or conversions to ensure that digital materials meet the minimum technical requirements for inclusion in the Digital Commonwealth repository.

# Responsibilities for Contributing Institutions

In partnership with Digital Commonwealth, Boston Public Library provides digitization services to contributing institutions as part of its Library for the Commonwealth program. These services could include collection assessments, project planning, metadata assistance, and/or digital imaging.

Although not required for the commencement of services, membership in Digital Commonwealth is highly encouraged as a way to build support for the organization and its affiliated programs. Information about Digital Commonwealth membership fees, rights, and responsibilities can be found here: [https://digitalcommonwealth.wildapricot.org/](https://digitalcommonwealth.wildapricot.org/)

To qualify for Boston Public Library digitization services, a contributing institution must agree to complete any tasks associated with the creation of the metadata that will accompany the digitized materials in the Digital Commonwealth repository. In addition, the contributing institution must agree to make all metadata associated with the hosted or harvested digital materials available under a Creative Commons 0 (CC0) license. The terms of this license can be found here: [https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/](https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/).

If the record(s) that should accompany the materials to be digitized are not in a repository-ready format, or if the contributing institution has not yet created records for the materials, Boston

Public Library might be able to help the institution plan and execute a metadata strategy. That strategy could include metadata editing, crosswalking, and/or creation of original records. Finally, to qualify for the Boston Public Library digitization services, a contributing institution must commit to making the digitized materials created through this program available in the Digital Commonwealth repository. The digitized materials can be ingested into the repository and made available as hosted digital items within Digital Commonwealth; or, they may be made available through the harvesting of metadata from an external repository system into Digital Commonwealth. Metadata records housed in Digital Commonwealth will also subsequently become available in DPLA.

Regarding harvesting: If digital files have already been created for a contributing institution's materials, and if they are already described and accessible in an external repository system or other asset management platform (for example, CONTENTdm, Omeka, or DSpace), the institution may be able to contribute materials to the Digital Commonwealth repository via harvesting. Toward that end, the institution (or consortium) must maintain its own system capable of making metadata records available using the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH). Note that, in the future, Digital Commonwealth may be able to harvest from other standards-compliant, web-based protocols for sharing item-level metadata.

## Copyright and Access Restrictions

Digital Commonwealth and Boston Public Library cannot and will not make assessments regarding the copyright status of the materials submitted for digitization. The acceptance of a digitization request and the subsequent provision of digital reproduction(s) do NOT constitute permission by any copyright holder and are NOT a substitute for diligent compliance with all applicable copyright requirements.

For items being harvested, the path from Digital Commonwealth must resolve in a digital object. That is, harvested material cannot be restricted by a firewall or other system-based barrier. If a user finds a relevant item record in Digital Commonwealth, that user must be able to view the item's digital surrogate in the owning institution's own repository system.

## Retention and Removal

Digital Commonwealth is intended to be a preservation repository. All materials that are held in the repository will be maintained and made available to the public into perpetuity. Every attempt will be made to maintain the technical and intellectual integrity of the materials stored in the repository.

Copyright holders have the right to request that materials be removed from the Digital Commonwealth repository.

Institutions contributing materials to the Digital Commonwealth repository must agree to allow the materials to remain in Digital Commonwealth in the absence of a pressing legal reason to remove them. Institutions wishing to remove materials from Digital Commonwealth must provide a signed letter from the copyright holder, or a letter of official complaint, explaining the reasons

for the removal. After careful consideration, a response will be issued. If the takedown request is accepted, the objects will be removed from public availability within ten business days. If the takedown request is rejected, the response will detail why and offer suggestions for next steps.

In the rare occasion that a contributing institution should permanently close, materials will be maintained in the Digital Commonwealth repository unchanged for a year from the time of closure. After that time, Boston Public Library staff will make a good faith effort to determine the proper Rights and Licensing statements to use and to update the metadata accordingly. As applicable, the new owning institution may contact Boston Public Library before or after this period to request a change in the Rights and Licensing statements, or to request the removal of the material from the repository.

## Policy Review

The Digital Commonwealth Board of Directors and the Boston Public Library staff will review this Collection Development Policy every three years and will vote to maintain or update the policy at that time. Outside of the three-year review cycle, the policy may be reviewed and updated by the Board of Directors or by Boston Public Library staff at any time. Any substantive changes will be brought to the attention of the Digital Commonwealth membership.

## Special Thank You

The Collection Development Taskforce would like to thank the DPLA and the DPLA Hubs that provided invaluable insight and assistance with the completion of this document.

## Collection Development Taskforce

The Collection Development Taskforce was formulated by Digital Commonwealth and Boston Public Library as part of their continuing partnership to provide digitization services and other resources to the the cultural heritage institutions of Massachusetts. Digital Commonwealth and Boston Public Library would like to extend a sincere thank you to those who assisted with the creation of this document:

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