The Great Peace Journey Digitisation Project
Report

Digitization has become an essential practice for memory institutions as they work to preserve and share cultural heritage. As Campagnolo (2020, p. 2) argues, when carried out thoughtfully, digitization offers far more than the creation of digital surrogates; it can enhance the original materials by revealing hidden details, fostering new forms of engagement, and creating meaningful connections between cultural objects. In this way, digitization not only safeguards the past but also revitalizes it for contemporary and future audiences.

With this objective in mind, we collaborated with KvinnSam, Sweden's national resource library for gender research, on a digitization project focused on the *Internationella Kvinnoförbundet för Fred och Frihet* (IKFF) and their "fredsblommor" (peace flower) pins. Based at the University of Gothenburg since 1971 and originally founded in 1958, KvinnSam is dedicated to documenting women's experiences. As a university-wide research infrastructure, it collects, organizes, and preserves materials related to gender studies and women's history, including those connected to the activism of IKFF. Our project contributes to this mission by making these artifacts digitally accessible, deepening public understanding of their cultural and historical significance and contributing to their long-term preservation.

This document describes the editorial and methodological decisions involved in the creation of *The Great Peace Journey Digitisation Project*. Each section of "Methodological Approaches and Decisions" provides an outline of, and reflection upon, the methodological choices involved in one significant element of the project. They sketch the ways in which the project aligns with what Dahlström labels "critical digitisation", in which close consideration underpins each stage of the digitisation process with the aim of accurately reproducing, and adding value to, the documents and objects digitised. (2011, p.97) This is followed by a discussion of the value of the project and some concluding thoughts about the process.

1.Methodological Approaches and Decisions

1.1 Material selection

The project digitises a range of distinct, but thematically related, items related to fundraising activities undertaken by the *Internationalla Kvinnoförbundet för Fred och Frihet* (IKFF) in support of The Great Peace Journey. Selection of items to digitise was based primarily upon the criteria of thematic consistency. We began with a suggestion from KvinnSam to digitise the *fredsblommor* pins sold by the IKFF as a part of their fundraising activities. While the flower pins are beautiful, handmade objects, we realised that to digitise only the pins would necessitate a great deal of contextual description to communicate their role and significance to users of the project. We decided to address this problem by situating the flowers within the specific fundraising context of The Great Peace Journey. By also digitising promotional and administrative documents related to fundraising for this event, we were able to allow these other documents to provide the information that sets the flower pins in context.

The focus on The Great Peace Journey also means that our digitalisation project is scalable. It might, for example, be the first stage of a broader digitisation of KvinnSam's extensive archive of documents related to the Journey, or the beginning of a digital archive documenting the fundraising and advertising activities of IKFF over time. It is also significant that our project brings together items held across two different archival collections housed at KvinnSam, one for documentation related to IKFF, and one related specifically to The Great Peace Journey. In this way the project demonstrates the ways in which digitisation can facilitate new connections and bring together documents and objects in new ways.

In addition to these thematic considerations, we were also interested in digitising a variety of different object forms that would allow us to test the different digitisation techniques encountered on this course. We therefore complimented the rich physicality of the flower pins with documents whose primary interest lies in their content. Before beginning our project, we also checked if similar projects were available online to avoid duplication.

1.1.1 Copyright

A further consideration in selection of items was copyright. We contacted IKFF to ask for permission for digital reproduction, which was given. CC-BY NC ND is the strongest creative commons licence and was used as the material was produced in the 1980s and such still exists under copyright owned by IKFF. The material cannot be used for commercial purposes (NC) and if modified should not be reposted or used publicly (ND). The material should only be used non-commercially and then not modified and with an acknowledgment to the copyright holders (Creative Commons, 2013).

1.2 Image Capture and Optimisation

The image capture process was shaped by both practical limitations and theoretical considerations. All digitized materials: handmade pins, a poster, a fundraising letter, and a 3D storage box, had to remain within the special reading room of the Humanities Library, restricting our setup and equipment mobility. Our initial capture attempt, using a mobile

phone, a ring light, and a handheld Nikon D3200 DSLR camera, revealed several limitations, such as inconsistent focus, lack of colour calibration, and our insufficient knowledge of professional camera settings. Learning from this, we conducted a second, more technically sound session using a tripod-mounted Nikon D3200 with both telephoto and standard lenses. The materials were captured using simultaneous output of both RAW format (.NEF) and .JPG, manual focus, Adobe RGB colour space, no flash, and controlled lighting provided by KvinnSam.

Since the flower pins required close-up image capture, based on their small size of approximately 5 cm, to preserve as much fidelity as possible we had to gather knowledge on which method would be the most applicable with regards to both our material and the tools we had available. The macro photography method was the most useful for our purpose as it focuses on image capture of small things in close-up with the focus of enhancing the details of the subject (Photography.com, 2008). As we lacked more specialised equipment to use the method, in particular a macro lens, we had to find ways to utilise what we had access to, a telephoto lens. Telephoto lenses are usually used for long range photography for example by ornithologists but as it produces a strong focused magnification akin to a telescope it is possible to use for macro photography. To this purpose photographer Nathan Goldbergs blogpost “Can You Use a Telephoto Lens for Macro Photography” (2021) was of great aid to find the optimal set up for our image capture. Exposure settings were ISO 100 which is the lowest the camera allows, higher values are used for low light photography where a slower shutter speed is not possible as in photography of moving subjects. A fairly wide aperture of f/5.6 was used as the subject required a fairly low depth of field. The shutter speed was set to 1/8s. A slower shutter speed would possibly have been preferable as we used a tripod and camera movement was not an issue, the issue we had with a slower shutter speed was the lighting. Longer shutter speed allows for more light to hit the sensor and with our lighting condition where natural light from the outside was not possible to eliminate a slower shutter speed only resulted in an overexposed image.

While we lacked a proper SpyderCheckr colour chart (or another standardised colour correction tool), a sheet of plain white printer paper was used as a substitute for white balancing, introducing some uncertainty in colour fidelity that required extensive post-processing adjustments.

Given the limited access to 3D digitization tools, we adopted a workaround for the fredsblommor box, capturing it from multiple angles to document its physical form. The box was treated as a layered object, unpacked visually through a sequence of images, to highlight its relationship with the pins it contained, aligning with best practices outlined in DFG guidelines (DFG, 2016, p. 23). Image post-processing involved two main tools: RAW files were first adjusted in *Darktable* for initial white balancing and exposure corrections, and then refined in *GIMP*, where additional colour correction was applied manually. The free marking tool in GIMP was used to isolate objects by masking backgrounds, allowing for precise

cropping and exporting of .PNG files that allows preservation of the transparent background for the more irregularly shaped objects and function as a less “lossy” image format than .JPG preserving a higher visual clarity to display on the website with the trade-off of being larger (less compressed) files. Rulers included in the image frames helped maintain a sense of scale, which was often diminished in the final cropped outputs. While the website presents optimised .PNG versions, the inclusion of original unedited .JPG files enhances transparency, offering readers insight into the variability of digital representation and enabling future recalibration if needed. This phase of the project underscored the importance of iterative testing, proper technical preparation, and balancing fidelity with accessibility.

1.3 Text Capture and Text Encoding

Three of the digitised items were amenable to OCR reading and subsequent text encoding: the back of the poster, and the two letters sent by IKFF. As each of these documents is clearly printed (in the case of the poster) or typewritten (the letters), the transformation from image to machine-readable text using OCR was unproblematic. JPG images were uploaded to Google Drive, then opened via Google Docs to produce a transcription of the texts. These texts were manually checked for errors and, as very few were found, the OCR generated text became the basis of text encoding. While we re-photographed the items to improve image quality, the image quality of the earliest images was sufficient for successful OCR. One difficulty with OCR was the front of the poster, which Google Docs could not convert into machine-readable text, and which contained text in five languages. While the European languages were easily typed into the TEI document, the Russian text was added by searching for and individually inserting each character from the character map in Oxygen.

The texts were encoded in Oxygen software, using TEI vocabulary to provide descriptive mark-up. Best practice was ensured in the encoding of the texts by following TEI guidelines. The checks built into the software also helped to ensure that the code was valid and well-formed. The texts were encoded to markup structural characteristics of the text such as headings <head>, paragraphs <p>, lists <list>, letter openers and closers, etc. Encoding also marked typographical and layout features such as the position of sections of texts in the poster and line breaks <lb/>.

Text encoding was also used to add value to the digitised text by marking up specific elements that might be of interest to users of the digitised resource. One of our documents references several organisations that IKFF contacted with fundraising requests. TEI encoding was used to mark the name of each organisation with the tag <orgName>, making all organisations mentioned across these documents potentially collectively searchable in future uses of TEI. Some referents, such as the IKFF itself and the UN, reoccurred across the documents. These were each labelled with an xml:id that brings together mentions of the organisation in Swedish and in English across this multi-lingual collection of resources and captures both abbreviations and full titles. This might be of use, for example, for research into interactions between the UN and political protest groups.

The TEI header contains further metadata that might be useful to users of our project, including a link to the archives housed at KvinnSam. In this way, it facilitates a weaving of links across a range of digital (and physical) resources. This aligns with one of the principal

affordances of digitised cultural material outlined by *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft,* who write that digitisation of cultural heritage materials:

> helps build an infrastructure that turns the Internet into an integral research space for the increasingly digital world of research in the humanities and cultural studies.... The objective is not only to make these materials available and usable, but also and especially to interconnect the different resources to form a virtual research infrastructure. (2013, p.10)

It should also be noted that while most of the structural and a great deal of the typographic markup is evident in the transformation of the TEI into the project's website, this is not true for all the informative, value-adding markup. This separation between display and content is a significant feature of TEI's descriptive (as opposed to procedural) markup, allowing different users and different web transformation scenarios to access different elements marked through TEI. While the web presentation could be easily changed, the TEI is suited for a more long-term and interoperable digitisation of the content of these documents, and further information could be accrued to this document through further markup. Through this combination of detailed, high-quality facsimiles with stable, interoperable and extensible machine-readable transcriptions, we hoped to maximise the value of our digitised resources.

1.4 TEI as a Frame and Transformations

In addition to using TEI as a tool to mark up the text of digitised documents, it was also used as a frame to hold together all the digitised documents, making them amenable to publishing as HTML via XSL transformations and CSS.

Initially, we thought that a TEI Corpus might be the best technique for distinguishing between and holding together the diverse range of documents and objects involved in our project, with each document/ object type held as a separate <TEI> element within the corpus. This choice was based upon the TEI guidelines, which state "The Tei Corpus element…may be… useful in encoding…disparate collections of material (...It) makes explicit the multiplicity of the collection, whatever it may be." (www.tei-c.org). The TEI Corpus structure, however, seemed to be incompatible with the XSL transformation options available on Canvas. As such, a decision was made to place all the different documents within one <TEI> file, and to distinguish them from one another using elements marked with an xml:id that distinguished each object. The addition of <head type= "editorial"> elements and introductory notes <note type= "introductory"> meant that the TEI transformed into a set of clearly defined and separated documents when converted into a HTML website but perhaps sacrificed some clarity in the structure of the TEI for long term storage and reuse. (The <encodingDesc> element in the TEI header was used to clearly articulate the meaning of these attributes). We noticed very near to the end of the project that a model and transformation scenario for TEI Corpus was, in fact, available on Canvas, but on the advice of teachers on the course decided not to switch the structure of our TEI so close to completion of the project. If the project were to be returned to or expanded, a TEI Corpus structure might facilitate cleaner distinctions between the different texts and objects, greater

flexibility of website layout, as well as the inclusion of greater descriptive information about each item.

Small additions and edits were made to the various XSL templates and CSS style sheets to visually distinguish different parts of the text transcriptions, such as lists, handwritten notes and emphasis, as well as the editorial interventions of introductory notes and headers on the webpage.

1.5 Metadata

An essential outcome of this digitization project has been the creation of rich, structured metadata that enhances the accessibility, discoverability, and long-term preservation of the digitized materials. While the visual files of the *fredsblommor* pins, fundraising letters, and poster are central to the project, it is the accompanying metadata—descriptive, technical, and contextual—that ensures these cultural objects can be meaningfully reused across platforms and disciplines. As Scheltjens (2023) observes, digitization can potentially generate vast quantities of metadata that are often more reusable and sustainable than the digital files themselves. By adhering to established metadata standards and ensuring interoperability, the project not only supports current scholarly engagement but also lays a foundation for future research, digital curation, and cross-institutional collaboration.

Metadata is stored in two significant ways within the project:

A) The TEI header contains structured metadata both about the project itself and about the digitised objects. Descriptive metadata about the project is included in the <fileDesc>. The <encodingDesc> contains further structural metadata, describing the sampling practice behind the choice of materials, as well as explaining some of the attributes used in the body of the TEI.

   Basic descriptive metadata about the objects digitised is provided via <SourceDesc>, which both describes the documents as a collection (including a link to the archive details of the originals) and provides basic descriptive metadata for each object individually. This is structured in the form of a list which provides information about authorship and date for each separate object. Further descriptive and contextual metadata is included in the <profileDesc>, which includes a narrative abstract, a list of keywords corresponding with the Library of Congress Thesaurus for Graphic Materials, and closer description of the organisation IKFF. (As noted above, a TEI Corpus structure would have facilitated the storage of more detailed metadata related to each individual object within the TEI file.)

B) More extensive descriptive and technical metadata is stored in the “Collections” folder in GitHub. Metadata is both embedded into each image and listed in an additional XML file corresponding to each image. Embedded descriptive metadata were all formatted through the Dublin core guidelines (DCMI Usage Board, 2012). Unique metadata for each image includes a title, a narrative description of the object depicted, languages used in the image, date of production, and keywords taken from LoC Thesaurus for Graphic Materials (Library of Congress, 2007). In addition, each file includes metadata of a more general character, applicable to all digitized material

in this project: Author, Contributor, and Right. In addition to the added Dublin Core metadata, camera-generated technical metadata (e.g., EXIF data) was also extracted and included. This metadata is meant to provide information of both the original object and the image capture process. The camera-generated technical metadata is meant to openly display the camera settings for technically minded people who are interested in how the images were produced while the Dublin core metadata is supposed to inform interested people in the depicted objects. The embedded and external metadata hence preserves information of both the content of the files and the process around the production of them in case the image files themselves become unreadable.

1.6 Long-term Storage

Many digitisation projects in general, and this digitisation project in particular, are defined by the dual objectives of availability and preservation. While the publication of The Great Peace Journey website makes our digitised items available, we have also paid attention to their long-term storage. Texts were encoded using the TEI. The semantically (rather than procedurally) structured markup language supports long-term reuse, even as technologies around the presentation of the content online might change. The interoperability and non-proprietary nature of the TEI also facilitates the possibility of other actors adding to and developing this project. With this in mind, we have tried to use the TEI header to clearly describe any unusual or project-specific use of attributes, such as <note type= "introductory">. Using the <facsimile> element, the TEI file also forms a structural link between image files and the encoding of texts that they contain, facilitating future comprehensibility.

The entire repository is stored both on GitHub and on an external hard drive. To facilitate potential reuse and storage by interested parties, ownership of the GitHub repository will be transferred to IKFF after the completion of this project.

1.7 Approximation of time spent

Image capture was performed over two attempts of around 4 hours each.
Colour correction and other image transformation took approximately thirty hours, including a retouching of all images as the first attempt did not present well on the website.
A rough estimate of around twenty hours were spent on OCR transformations and text encoding and approximately ten hours were spent working with the TEI as a frame, and with the transformations that shaped the appearance of the website.
Writing abstracts for images took around two hours, and the writing of the metadata into the images through Exiftool and additional work to extract information from the images with the same tool required around eight to ten hours.
The rewriting of some of the website code and took approximately 20 hours and required a lot of trial and error.
In all of the above estimates, it is hard to distinguish the active work time from the time it took to research best practices as well as the technical methods required.

2. The Value of the Project

2.1 The Project's Relevance to Cultural Heritage Preservation

As Graham R. Gibbs (2012) notes, documents serve as valuable evidence of how events unfolded during a particular period. Preserving the letters from the Great Peace Journey affirms the authenticity and significance of the initiative and highlights its broader outreach and impact. Digitizing these materials supports the goal of ensuring their long-term preservation and accessibility, making them searchable and available to future generations through online platforms.

This project also resonates with Sweden's political legacy of promoting peace, a stance prominently articulated by former Prime Minister Olof Palme. In his address to the UN General Assembly in 1975, Palme emphasized the importance of disarmament, solidarity, and international cooperation as foundations for global peace—principles also central to the work of the IKFF. His speeches gave political weight to ideals that grassroots movements like IKFF were advocating on the ground through symbolic campaigns such as the *fredsblommor* pins. By preserving these materials digitally, this project not only documents the civic expression of such ideals but also reflects the broader synergy between Swedish foreign policy, civil society, and gendered peace activism. In this way, the digitization of the *fredsblommor* pins stands as a testament to a uniquely Swedish model of peacebuilding—one that united official political voices and grassroots action in a shared vision for a more just and peaceful world.

This digitization project holds deep relevance for cultural heritage preservation by safeguarding and contextualizing material evidence of Sweden's longstanding tradition of civil society activism, particularly within the peace and feminist movements. The *fredsblommor* pins are powerful symbols of grassroots mobilization in the service of peace, disarmament, and gender equality values that have played a crucial role in shaping Swedish political identity. Sweden's peace movement, especially as driven by women also reflects the unique strength of the country's *föreningsliv*—the democratic culture of voluntary associations that has served as a cornerstone of civic engagement. IKFF, as a key actor within this space, has historically bridged the gap between local activism and international diplomacy. Campaigns involving the *fredsblommor* pins were not merely fundraising or awareness tools; they were embodiments of a participatory political culture, used to engage citizens directly in peace advocacy and to support IKFF's international work within the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

The cultural and historical significance of these objects is further illuminated by the recent publication of Elizabeth Gerle's personal narrative, *Allt är omöjligt. Och vi ger oss inte* (2020), which documents her experiences as part of the IKFF's peace journey. Her account provides a first-person, reflective layer to the movement's history, blending personal testimony with political insight. Gerle's work underscores the emotional and ideological depth behind the physical artifacts we are digitizing, enriching their historical context and underscoring the urgency of preserving such testimonies within digital and archival

frameworks. The publication has re-energized interest in the IKFF's legacy, making the timing of this digitization project especially relevant and impactful.

Through our collaboration with KvinnSam, Sweden's national resource library for gender research, we ensure that this project aligns with broader efforts to make women's political and cultural contributions visible and accessible. KvinnSam's expertise and infrastructure allow for both the preservation and scholarly exploration of gendered perspectives in peace activism—perspectives that have historically been underrepresented in mainstream historical narratives. By digitizing the *fredsblommor* pins alongside related archival material, the project not only safeguards fragile historical objects but also affirms their ongoing relevance. It supports educational and research initiatives and fosters public engagement with Sweden's heritage of nonviolence, democratic participation, and feminist advocacy. In doing so, the project contributes meaningfully to a more inclusive and multidimensional preservation of cultural heritage, where symbolic artifacts, written records, and lived experiences coalesce.

2.2 Ethical Aspects of Cultural Heritage Preservation. Digitizing cultural heritage objects such as the *fredsblommor* peace pins involves more than technological processes; it demands ethical reflection. As McCarthy (2007) argues, heritage work is inherently political and involves decisions about which narratives are preserved, highlighted, or omitted. This project consciously seeks to make visible the historical and political contributions of women in Sweden's peace movement—voices that have often been marginalized within dominant archival frameworks. By preserving and sharing these symbols digitally, under principles of accessibility and cultural responsibility, the project supports a more equitable and inclusive heritage landscape. It also acknowledges the intangible dimensions of heritage—activism, solidarity, and memory—treating them with the ethical care they deserve in the process of digital stewardship.

2.3 The Perspective of the Organizations Involved

KvinnSam did not express many preferences around the form and content of the digitisation project but were open and interested to see what we would do with their archives. They did, however, express an interest in a physical exhibition of our digitised work to be displayed in the entrance to the Humanities Library at the University of Gothenburg. The high quality of our photographs of the flower pins, which capture the subtle differences between each handmade pin and document an unpacking of the pins from their box, are particularly well suited for such display, while our images of the front and the back of the poster are both visually arresting and provide useful contextual information about the flowers.

When informed about our intentions, IKFF also expressed their interest in our project and in the publication of the website. As with KvinnSam, they did not express any specific requirements in relation to the project but were excited to see its results. Upon the completion of the project, ownership of its GitHub repository will be transferred to IKFF.

3. Conclusions

Our project has resulted in the critical digitisation of a small selection of items of cultural significance. High quality image files present multiple views of each object, documenting their materiality, while text encodings ensure that language content is machine-readable and searchable. The high-quality images are supported by text encodings, detailed and standardised metadata, and an HTML website that work together to: contextualise and provide access to the digital items, support their long-term preservation and storage, and allow for later development of or contributions to the work of the project.

While our work on the project aligns with these three-fold aims, its completion involved the development of many new skills and much trial-and-error, and there are places where the work might be improved. One example, which has been noted above, is that a TEI Corpus structure might have facilitated the collection of more structured metadata for each individual object within the TEI, alongside the text transcriptions. The separation between documents allowed for by the TEI Corpus might make more sense if this project was to be developed to include a larger number of documents and objects. Our image creation and presentation might also have paid more attention to documenting the relative size of the diverse digitised objects. The unedited .JPG files displayed on one page of the website include a ruler, but such details might have been given greater precedence both in the metadata of the images and in the online presentation.

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