New York Public Library

Report to the Digital Library Federation
April, 2005

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I. Collections, services, and systems

A. Collections

As described below, the NYPL recently launched the NYPL Digital Gallery, a web site providing access of hundreds of thousands of images from the collections of the Research Libraries. While we will continue to add collections to the site through the end of the year, the following collections are among those presented at the project's launch.

Changing New York: Photographs by Berenice Abbott, 1935-1938

Changing New York: Photographs by Berenice Abbott, 1935-1938 343 black and white photographs by Berenice Abbott (1898-1991) from her Changing New York Works Progress Administration/ Federal Art Project. The Library's collection holds about 80% of the project's 302 images; this presentation includes variant and discarded images, plus other work Abbott produced as a project employee.
http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/explore/dgexplore.cfm?col_id=160.

Mountjoy Prison Portraits of Irish Independence: Photograph Albums in the Thomas A. Larcom Collection

150 salt and albumen print photographs in two albums, of prisoners confined in Mountjoy Prison, Dublin, in August 1857 and November 1866.
http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/explore/dgexplore.cfm?col_id=180.

Samuel Putnam Avery Print Collection and Related Works

Nearly 1,100 etchings, lithographs, and some drawings, by prominent 19th-century printmakers. Most of these works are part of the S. P. Avery Collection, complemented

by holdings found in the general Print Collection. Together they represent the Print Collection's complete holdings of Félix Bracquemond, Félix Buhot, Francisco Goya, Charles Jacque, Edouard Manet, Charles Méryon, and Camille Pissarro. http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/explore/dgexplore.cfm?col_id=196.

Theatre Productions and Players, 1900-1957: Vandamm Studio Photographs

The 1,520 items in this digital presentation are a sampling of an archive of more than 75,000 images of theatrical personalities and productions. Images in the current presentation represent glass plate and acetate negatives primarily. http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/explore/dgexplore.cfm?col_id=205.

William Blake's Hand-printed Masterpieces

Three original books in "relief etching" by William Blake, who composed the texts, designed the texts and decorations, and printed the pages: America: A Prophecy (1793 [1794?]), Europe: A Prophecy (1794), and Milton (1804 [i.e. 1808?]). http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/explore/dgexplore.cfm?col_id=156.

II. Projects and programs

A. Projects

New Project Announcements

NYPL Digital Gallery

The NYPL launched NYPL Digital Gallery in early March. The site provides access to over a quarter million images digitized from primary sources and printed rarities in the collections of The New York Public Library including illuminated manuscripts, historical maps, vintage posters, rare prints and photographs, illustrated books, printed ephemera, and more. The website helps to fulfill the traditional mission of The New York Public Library to select, collect, preserve and make accessible "the accumulated wisdom of the world, without distinction as to income, religion, nationality, or other human condition." It offers broad public access to a wide range of historical and cultural documents that "enable individuals to pursue learning at their own personal levels of interest, preparation, ability and desire, and help ensure the free trade in ideas and the right of dissent."

NYPL Digital Gallery runs on an open, extensible architecture designed by the Digital Library Program and managed in conjunction with the Library's Information Technology Group. Archival image files are stored on a 57-terabyte network of servers (1 terabyte = 1,000 gigabytes, or 1 trillion bytes). Together, the image files and the data hierarchy and structure are managed through an Oracle database. A systematic XML extract of this data is indexed with the Java open-source search engine Lucene, which provides the public search matrix. ColdFusionMX software provides the application programming interface

that integrates metadata and images for web delivery, via a website interface developed with consultant support by the Digital Library Program.

Digital Gallery makes use of three RedHat Linux 9 web servers running Apache. All images are displayed from two Windows 2003 servers also running Apache. http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/

In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience

February 1, 2005 marked the launch of In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience web site. In Motion chronicles four hundred years of African Americans on the move: the people, the places, and the events that shaped the past, the present, and the future of 35 million people In Motion. A sweeping narrative from the transatlantic slave trade to the Great Migration, from the Western migration to the contemporary immigration of Caribbeans, Haitians, and sub-Saharan Africans, this groundbreaking site includes 25,000 pages of texts, rare visual materials, maps, contemporary photojournalism, and lesson plans.

Other project components include the companion book, In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience, released by National Geographic in January 2005; a Black History Month education kit comprised of illustrations and photographs, maps, lesson plans and a bibliography; and an exhibition in the Schomburg Center Exhibition Hall. Through images, artifacts, maps, narratives and music, this extraordinary exhibition, on display through April 30, will present, chronicle, and interpret the migratory movements that have formed and transformed the African-American community and the nation in the last century. http://www.inmotionaame.org/index.cfm

Update on Existing Projects - Projects in progress 2005:

Building a Globally Distributed Historical Sheet Map Set

Building a Globally Distributed Historical Sheet Map Set The NYPL, along with the American Geographical Society Library, is serving as a partner on an IMLS National Leadership Grant based at the University of Connecticut, Homer Babbidge Library, Map and Geographic Information Center.

The project addresses the needs of non-specialists using map and geographic data by designing an international, metadata-driven, dynamic tool that will enable users to access and view scanned and geo-referenced maps by searching a digital gazetteer. NYPL is participating in the project by providing digital captures with brief metadata of its holdings, more than 700 items, of a multi-sheet set of historical topographic maps of the Austro-Hungarian Empire covering the period 1877-1914. The result will be a seamless map drawn from several participating repositories.

Outcomes of this project should include new models for approaching image data compression, geo-referencing, merging metadata digital gazetteers and new Geographic Information Systems.

The project began in December of 2004 and will end in November of this year.

National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP)

Creating Digital Access to Significant New York State Newspapers, 1900-1910

The New York Public Library (NYPL) has been selected to participate in Phase One of the National Digital Newspaper Project, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Library of Congress. The Library will work with Cornell University Library as a technical partner in this project.

The Library will digitize 100,000 pages of historical New York State newspapers on microfilm from the period 1900-1910. The Library has selected ten newspaper titles that represent the lively press, which has borne witness to a rich tapestry of historical events, and so meet the NDNP criteria for historical significance, coverage, completeness of holdings, and quality of filming. They are: The Sun, The Evening Sun, Evening Telegram, New York Evening Journal, Morning Telegraph, Brooklyn Daily Times, Irish World, New York Age, The World, and The Evening World.

Staff has verified the availability of master negative microfilm at The New York Public Library, and identified other institutions that also hold these titles on microfilm. In many cases, the Library is the source of the microfilm that resides at other institutions. All titles meet the grant program's guidelines for chronological span---the years 1836 to 1922, and specifically the years 1900 to 1910.

The project will create digital images in TIFF 6.0, PDF, and JPEG200 formats, and OCR text files, for 100,000 newspaper pages. Technical and structural metadata and XML packets will be produced for every image.

The METRO Grant

The METROpolitan New York Library Council (METRO) recently launched "Digital METRO New York," a collaborative digitization project that funds history and cultural heritage projects related to New York City and Westchester County. Grants totaling $70,000 were awarded to nine of METRO's member libraries. The New York Public Library was one recipient and will be participating by completing a project entitled "The New York Public Library: Map Digitization Project." A selection of real estate maps of Manhattan and Brooklyn, from the 1850s through the 1860s, when the two boroughs were still separate cities, will be digitized. The maps were created by William Perris and are of a genre of maps most commonly referred to as "Sanborns."

A Virtual Archive of Whitman's Manuscripts

The New York Public Library is participating in "A Virtual Archive of Whitman's Manuscripts" as one of two-dozen sub-contracting institutions for the University of Nebraska's IMLS national leadership grant. Materials from The Humanities and Social Sciences Library's Berg Collection of British and American Literature are being captured at 600 dpi.

B. Programs

The METRO Digitization Advisory Council

The Metropolitan New York Library Council (METRO) recently established METRO Digitization Advisory Council. Members will advice METRO on its continuing digitization initiatives and activates including the Digital METRO New York. Several staff members from the NYPL Digital Library Program are members of the Council and its working groups.

III. Specific Digital Library Challenges

The main challenge facing The New York Public Library Digital Library Program today is the self same challenge facing all major digital collections, viz. sustainability; the financial, technological and institutional support that is needed to grow collections, develop and provide services and integrate digital activities in the normal flow of library work.