

Scenario 6: The Case of the Driven Digitization

Your predecessor — whose name is Armita and *not* Ralph, no matter what Mx Porter may have told you — was less of a scholarly communication librarian and more of a digital collections specialist. She focused more on the institutional repository, and especially on publishing unique local items from the library's archives in a manner the public could access.

Even though the library decided it needed to focus more on the publication and research process on campus prior to hiring you, everything your predecessor did is still there, and you've been tasked with maintaining and growing the online collections they started. As time permits, of course. Your primary interest has always been scholarly communication, but you can't deny that the IR work is interesting.

You get to learn a lot about the institution's particular history, and how it intersects with changes in American lifestyles and history over the decades since its founding in the mid-1800s.

It also lets you attend fancy functions like the one you're at right now, a launch party of sorts for the last online exhibition Armita put together before her well-earned retirement. You've already picked her brain for advice before wishing her the best, and now you're taking in the exhibit and trying to decide if going back to the snack table for seconds would embarrass you.

Before you can make up your mind, an elderly person comes your way.

"Are you the new librarian?" they ask. "Armita said you could help me."

You nod and introduce yourself — you don't see a public feed anywhere near them, so you're not sure if they even have an augment to read your own — and politely ask their name and pronouns.

They wave the questions away. "Never mind about that right now. Armita told me your archives has a large collection of images and videos from the early 1900s. I can't seem to find them online, though. Why not?"

You wonder if perhaps you asked Armita a few too many questions about how to run digital collections, and this is her revenge. Still, no help for it now. "I don't think they've been digitized," you admit. "I'm not sure why, though. I just started working here recently."

"I know that," they reply, with a little huff. "I'm trying to tell you they're important, and that you should be the one to digitize them."

"Well, I'll certainly look into it," you say, "but--"

"Armita always said that too," they interrupt. "But she never got around to it, no matter how many times I told her they'd be useful for genealogy work and local history. A lot of important things went on here in the 1930s, you know."

You make polite conversation with them for a while, letting them talk about a topic that's obviously near and dear to their heart and trying to determine how much of this is a one-person interest and how much might genuinely be shared by the rest of the community.

You still haven't managed it when Armita herself comes over.

"I see you've met Mr. Jones," she says. "He's quite the local history expert, you know."

"So I've heard," you say, weakly, relieved that at least you have a name and a set of pronouns now. "He was telling me about all the images and videos we have in the archives, things he'd like to see digitized."

"Of course," she says with an ironic little smile on her face. "So, what have you decided?"

Scenario 7 Resources

Georgieva, M. (2018). The Digital Librarian: The Liaison between Digital Collections and Digital Preservation. https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/lib_articles/589

This brief essay introduces some common job duties of digital librarians. Although scholarly communication librarians will not always have the same duties, there is sufficient overlap in some positions that familiarizing yourself with the basics is a good idea.

McCarty Smith, K., Gwynn, D., Koelsch, B. A., & Motszko, J. (2019). Who's driving the bus? Or how digitization is influencing archival collections. *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies*, 6. <https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas/vol6/iss1/28>

Written by a group of archivists, this article discusses the tensions between making archival content accessible and following recommended archival practices of description and arrangement. Rather than just talking about principles, the article presents three different case studies of digitization and lessons learned from each.

Schaffner, J., Snyder, F., & Supple, S. (2011). *Scan and deliver: Managing user-initiated digitization in special collections and archives*. OCLC Research. <https://www.oclc.org/content/dam/research/publications/library/2011/2011-05.pdf>

The phrase "scan and deliver" takes on jokingly sinister overtones in the title to this OCLC report from 2011. Fortunately, the report itself makes no reference to highwaymen, and instead suggests workflows and questions to ask before diving into the digitization of archival (or other) items at the request of end users.

Warren-Jones, E. (2018, January 31). Why digital archives matter to librarians and researchers. *De Gruyter Conversations*. <https://blog.degruyter.com/why-digital-archives-matter-to-librarians-and-researchers/>

This post on the blog of academic publisher De Gruyter is a great overview of the current landscape of digital archival materials, including conversations with archivists, librarians, and the researchers likely to make use of their collections.