



GOOD TO GREAT: MINNESOTA DIGITAL LIBRARY FINAL REPORT

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Executive Summary

Established in 2003, today the Minnesota Digital Library's Minnesota Reflections includes 169 digital collections from 168 contributing institutions and more than 230,000 digital items¹. For more than a decade, Minnesota's cultural heritage organizations have collaborated to increase discovery of resources that reflect Minnesota's cultural and historic heritage, provide a foundation that supports digitization of collections, delivers staff training to develop digital knowledge and skills, and develops a funding infrastructure to support a robust statewide digital program. MDL has been a national leader in the Digital Public Library of America program, contributing nearly 469,000² items from Minnesota's archives, libraries, historical societies and museums.

To determine the current status of digitization and determine future digital activities of Minnesota's libraries and cultural heritage organizations, the Minnesota Digital Library undertook an assessment during the spring of 2015. A series of focus groups and a survey was conducted that assessed the current level of satisfaction with the program, identified digital program policies and practices, and determined potential areas for growth. Reports have been prepared summarizing the results of the focus group sessions and the survey. This report summarizes the results of these reports, and identifies several key strategic initiatives for moving forward and the foundational elements necessary for continued success.

Key recommendations fall into two categories, strategic initiatives and elements that must be continued to support the collaborative initiative, which we are calling foundational pillars. The strategic initiatives are designed to move the Minnesota Digital Library and Minnesota Reflections from good to great by:

- Expanding access to the Minnesota Reflections collection, supporting innovative use and reuse, while continuing contribution to the DPLA
- Expanding contribution by current contributors and attracting new contributors through new strategies
- Assuring long term access to the digital collections through a statewide digital preservation service
- Expanding advocacy and marketing efforts that promote Minnesota Reflections and the organizations that contribute the collections.

While moving forward with new initiatives, the Minnesota Digital Library must continue those key foundational activities that have built and supported the collaborative, including training and continuing education, standards and best practices, technology infrastructure, and policies.

We want to take this opportunity to thank Valerie Horton, Minitex Executive Director, Jolie Graybill, Assistant Director, and the Minnesota Digital Library staff for their support during this project.

¹ Jason Roy. *Digital Public Library of America: Minnesota's Contribution*. MDL Annual Meeting, June 15, 2015. <http://mndigital.org/files/meeting-docs/2015/roy-dpla.pdf>. Accessed July 14, 2015.

² Ibid.

Background

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Purpose of Minnesota Digital Library

The Minnesota Digital Library (MDL) supports discovery and education through access to unique digital collections shared by cultural heritage organizations from across the state of Minnesota. Contributors include libraries, historical societies, museums, and archives.

The Minnesota Digital Library also provides education and training opportunities focusing on digitization best practices, metadata for digital collections, and digital preservation⁵.

Strategic Initiatives—Good to Great: Minnesota Digital Library Moving Forward

Access and Collections

Strategic Initiative: MDL will develop strategies to increase access to the digital collections held by Minnesota's cultural heritage organizations, expanding the content in Minnesota Reflections and the contribution to the Digital Public Library of America.

Rationale: Minnesota cultural heritage organizations reported a high level of overall satisfaction with the MDL and the Minnesota Reflections project. Respondents agreed that Minnesota Reflections has increased the public's awareness of their collections, and has helped build organizational capacity for digital collection management. Many Minnesota Reflections contributors have become more sophisticated in their digital practice over the past decade, with quite a few implementing their own

³ Jason Roy. *Digital Public Library of America: Minnesota's Contribution*. MDL Annual Meeting, June 15, 2015. <http://mndigital.org/files/meeting-docs/2015/roy-dpla.pdf>. Accessed July 14, 2015.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Minnesota Digital Library. <http://mndigital.org/about>. Accessed July 16, 2015.

local content management systems and growing the capacity to digitize their own collections. To continue to build Minnesota Reflections, MDL will need to respond to the changes in the local environment by expanding its harvesting capacity, supporting changing local workflows, expanding approaches or options for harvesting content, exploring new linked data strategies and considering revision of the MDL collection development policy. However, MDL must also remain cognizant that many participants may never have their own local content management systems, and work with those institutions on access issues as well.

Digital Preservation

Strategic Initiative: To assure long term access to the digital collections held by Minnesota's cultural heritage organizations, the Minnesota Digital Library in collaboration with partner organizations, will implement a statewide digital preservation program.

Rationale: The Minnesota Digital Library and its contributing partners have made significant investments in their digital collections over the past decade. Assuring access to these collections for future Minnesotans will require a long term access strategy. The MDL and Minnesota's cultural heritage organizations have worked collaboratively to make the digital collections available; they can now develop a digital preservation solution to provide long term access.

Focus group participants and survey respondents reported that they are backing up files, however few have implemented a digital preservation program. While many of the academic libraries have a level of expertise in digital preservation, smaller organizations including public libraries and historical societies do not have the technical expertise or funding to support an institutional digital preservation program. A key issue for all was persuading management or boards in the importance of digital preservation, which is not uncommon in any type or size of cultural heritage institution.

Several statewide digital initiatives have established digital preservation as a priority initiative, recognizing that local organizations don't have the capacity to manage a preservation program. It also allows them to expand their initiative, attracting new partners, such as public television and radio organizations that have similar preservation issues without local solutions.

Advocacy and Promotion

Strategic Initiative: To build awareness and use of Minnesota Reflections, MDL and contributors will design and implement an advocacy program.

Rationale: While Minnesota Reflections has been available for more than a decade, it is important to continually promote the initiative to both cultural heritage organizations who add collections annually and to legislators, stakeholders, and the public, so they can become aware of and use the digitized collections.

Over the last several years, management of the Minnesota Digital Library has transitioned to Minitex. Much work has been done by staff and contributors during this time of transition, including development of the DPLA program, revision of the governance, modification the Minnesota Reflections application process, and staff changes. Focus group participants recognized these efforts, however they also noted a lack of awareness about the new staff, and how the program has transitioned. In the next year, it will be important to refocus efforts on connecting with contributors. There is a strong need for face-to-face contact with constituents on a regional basis, building MDL staff knowledge of local

collections, personnel, and organizations. Additionally, this regionally-based networking will provide MDL contributors with an opportunity to share knowledge, expertise, experiences, and resources, activities which they noted as very important facets of the program in the focus group meetings. This type of collaboration can lead to a partnering/mentoring environment on a local/regional basis.

Foundational Pillars—Elements that keep making it happen

Continuing education/training

Strategic initiative: Through a quality continuing education program, MDL strives to develop and implement training to assist cultural heritage workers to develop the knowledge and expertise to create and manage their organization’s digital collections.

Rationale: Key to continued success of the Minnesota Digital Library Minnesota Reflections program is a knowledgeable and skilled workforce. Minitex and the Minnesota Digital Library have decades of experience training cultural heritage staff. The DPLA recognized this expertise and selected the MDL as one of the recipients of the DPLA Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Public Library Partnership Project grants. Through this initiative, MDL offered training for public libraries on the development of digital skills that would assure long term digitization and sustainable digital collections. Focus group participants who attended these sessions recommended that these workshops be extended to all types of cultural heritage organizations in Minnesota.

Many focus group participants noted that their institutions experience regular staff turnover, and “reorientation” to MDL and Minnesota Reflections annually or every two years is needed. Two areas most frequently mentioned for training were metadata and copyright.

MDL offers a range of training opportunities, including online and in-person. It is recommended that combining face to face sessions with regional networking opportunities will allow for greater interaction and sharing among contributors.

Standards and best practices

Strategic initiative: MDL will work with Minnesota Reflections contributors toward the adoption of Minnesota Digital Library standards and best practices to assure the creation of quality collections and metadata, and support interoperability and the broadest sharing of collections.

Rationale: Standards and best practices are key to creating quality digital collections and assuring successful content discovery. Focus group participants noted that adhering to standards and best practices that responded to the ever changing local environment, while meeting the state and national environment impacted their contribution to Minnesota Reflections. Ongoing review and updating best practices in collaboration with contributors in key areas including rights management, metadata, and collection development will support ongoing contribution to Minnesota Reflections. In addition to these key areas, copyright training was mentioned in the Access and Collections section, however copyright policy needs to be formally addressed. There should be a high priority in bringing all of the different copyright statements that exist in MDL into agreement, and updating some to reflect current best practices in the digitization field. MDL leaders have been active participants in the recent work of DPLA on the analysis of copyright statements in the DPLA database. The MDL should consider the DPLA recommendations as part of their reconciliation of copyright statements.

Policies

Strategic initiative: MDL will assist partner institutions in development and or updating of digital program policies to allow for improved long term management of institutional and collaborative digital efforts.

Rationale: An important aspect of building digital programs is the development of policies. The survey showed that Minnesota cultural heritage institutions are better positioned than many other statewide groups when it comes to having written policies that addresses digital collections. A majority of the survey respondents have digital rights management policies, and have begun to develop digital preservation policies and digital collection development plans. However, a lack of policies, particularly language dealing with digital programs in institutional mission and goals, or in organizational strategic plans, is a concern, as is the number of organizations that have emergency or disaster plans which do not yet deal with their digital collections.

Survey respondents also indicated that they have not updated their deed of gift agreement/donor agreement to include digital collections. We recommend that MDL incorporate into their rights management workshop sample deeds of gift that include appropriate statements on digital collections and digital preservation rights.

While Minnesota Reflections has a collaborative collection development policy, this document needs to be updated to provide clearer guidance on selection criteria, and, once revised, needs to be better promoted to the Minnesota Reflections contributors; consideration needs to be given to the topical approach used in each phase, as it has limited contributor participation

The overall need for policy development, including rights management practices dealing with digital collections, and a lack of awareness of standards for digital creation, metadata creation, and metadata harvesting, spotlight areas where the Minnesota Digital Library can increase its educational, informational, and support offerings.

Technical infrastructure

Strategic Initiative: MDL provides a technical infrastructure that assures the broadest possible discovery of Minnesota cultural heritage organizations digital collections, and supports broad participation by these organizations.

Rationale: Providing a technical infrastructure that supports Minnesota Reflections has been a hallmark of the initiative. Capabilities including a content management system (CONTENTdm), digital conversion service, digital master storage and preservation, and data aggregation service that supports Minnesota's participation in DPLA have eased the way to participation.

As the contributing institutions' digital sophistication has increased, they have assumed some of these responsibilities. While the MDL will need to continue to provide a discovery system, MDL needs to explore how discovery strategies will work in 2020—is traditional search sufficient, or will there be new needs for reuse of collections; will the current content management system support those needs? Can Minnesota Reflections add apps similar to the DPLA apps that enhance use/reuse of the collections? Examples of reuse include blogging, web-based educational use, use in artistic works, and non-profit scholarly publishing.

In addition to conversion of traditional collections, advanced digital conversion services are needed, specifically in the areas of audio and video, management of data sets, as well as oversize materials. As noted above the preservation of the digital collections is also becoming a high priority.

Organizations that are managing their own content management systems will need more than storage of masters, they will need a digital preservation solution. MDL offering a statewide digital preservation service that integrates with the local content management systems will be a major benefit to contributors.

Lastly, MDL and cultural heritage organizations are exploring new digital collections including e-books, exhibits, and digital storytelling. Developing creative ways of building local content, exhibits, and stories with digital objects may help what is today's current literature become tomorrow's cultural heritage. While separate platforms may be established for e-books, there are a range of questions to consider, including how and if these collections will be integrated into our cultural heritage collections.