



# Digital Library Growing Pains: Mainstreaming Metadata and Reformatting Operations at The University of Iowa Libraries

Jen Wolfe and Mark F. Anderson | Working Session: Devising  
Staffing and Workflow Solutions... | Digital Library Federation Fall  
Forum | Nov. 2, 2010



**Young DL:  
aspiration and  
“skunk works”**

- experimental focus
- autonomous
- nimble
- process and practices in flux

**fringe**



**Maturing DL:  
from project to  
program**

- user focus
- standards, policies, documentation
- staff development, retraining, reorganization

**transitioning**



**Adult DL:  
from integration to  
interdependency**

- research orientation
- not functionally or organizationally distinct from library as a whole
- greater reliance on campus IT partners

**mainstreamed**

-- Greenstein & Thorin. *The Digital Library: A Biography* (DLF: 2002)  
<http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub109/pub109.pdf>



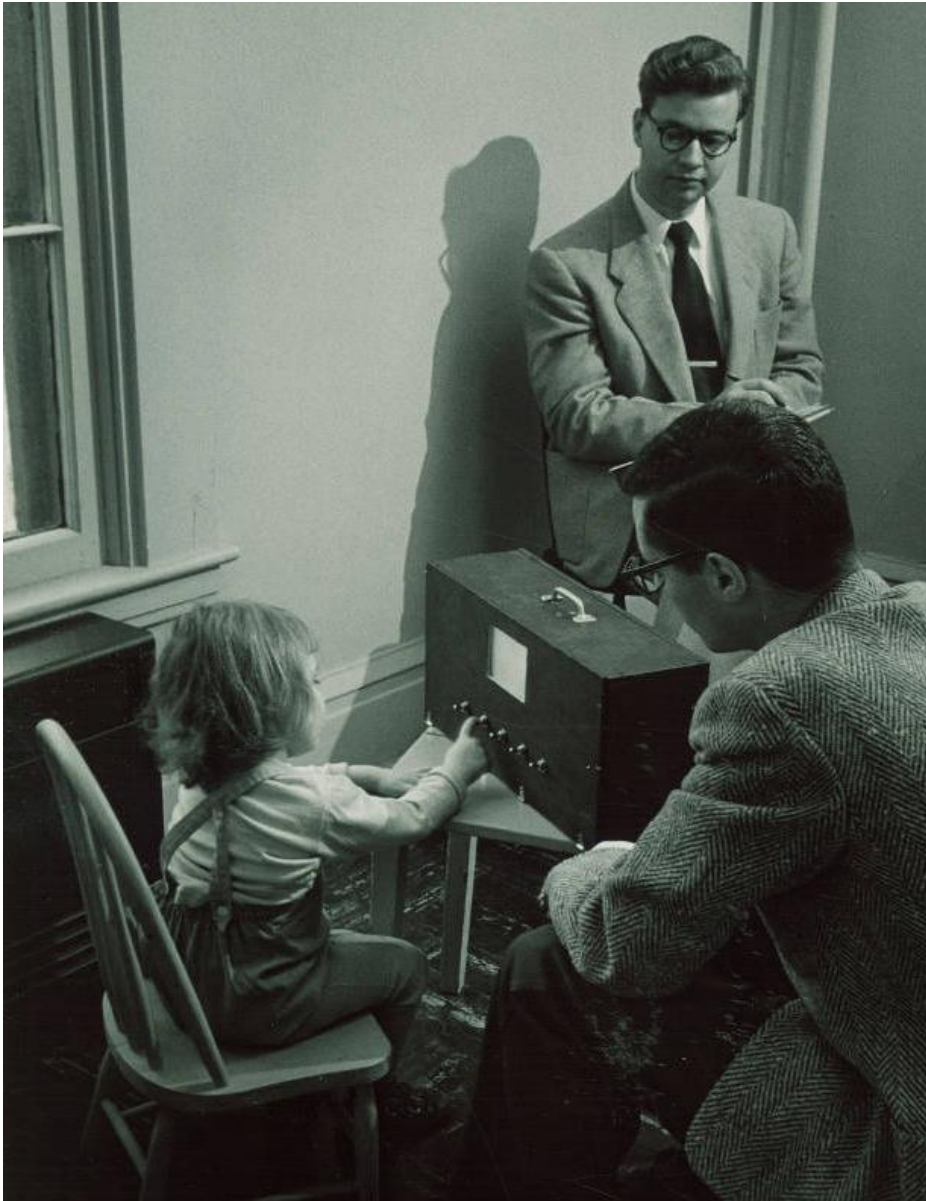
## Mass digitization

- ≠ web exhibit
- comprehensive scholarly resource
- issues of scale



## Technical Services

- anachronistic staffing levels
- vendor outsourcing
- eBooks
- retro projects winding down
- “next gen” resource discovery tools



## Preferred

- comfortable with a range of technology
- tolerance for ambiguity
- healthy disregard for organizational hierarchy



“Make it work” a.k.a. revise the old

- Devise workflow:
  - Pilot project
  - Liaison
  - Documentation, templating
- Streamlining processes

CONTENTdm Project Client

Project Add Item Edit Administration Help

Home Find in Collection icctcs Nurse measuring boy's...

Find & Replace Replace Item Spell Check More Actions ... Project Tab Items Save & Back Save & Ne

Save


Field Name	Field Values
Title	Measuring lung capacity with a spirometer, The University of Iowa, ca. 1920
Creator	Kent, Frederick W. (Frederick Wallace), 1894-1984
Publisher	
Date Original	
Description	
Note	
Topical Subject (LCTGM)	
Topical Subject (LCSH)	
Personal Name Subject	
Corporate Name Subject	University of Iowa; Iowa Child Welfare Research Station
Geographic Subject	United States -- Iowa -- Iowa City
Chronological Subject	
Type (DCMType)	Still image
Type (AAT)	Photographs
Type (DMT)	jpeg

Controlled Vocabulary

- Acrobatics
- Activities
- Actors
- Adults
- Advertisements
- Aeronautics
- Agricultural machinery & implements
- Air compressors
- Air mail service
- Air shows
- Airplane engines
- Airplane propellers
- Airplanes
- Airports
- Alcoholic beverages
- Altars
- Alumni & alumnae
- Ambulances
- Amphitheaters
- Animal experimentation
- Animals
- Anvils
- Apartment houses
- Aprons
- Aquariums
- Arbors (Bowlers)
- Archeological sites
- Archeology
- Archevy
- Arches
- Architectural drawings
- Architectural models
- Archives
- Armistices
- Armor
- Armories
- Arms & armament
- Arrows
- Art
- Art objects
- Artificial satellites
- Artillery (Weaponry)
- Artists
- Artists' models
- Artists' studios
- Arts & crafts
- Astronomical observato

Item Viewer

25%



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CONTENTdm Project Client

Project Add Item Edit Administration Help

Home Find in Collection ictcs

Find & Replace Spell Check Replace Items More Actions ...

Select All Clear All Upload for Approval Open in Tabs Delete

Thumbnail	Title	Creator	Date Original	Topical Subject (LCTGM)	Corporate Name Subject	Geographic Subject	Chronological Subject	Type (DCMIType)	Type (AAT)
	Measuring lung capacity with a spirometer, The University of Iowa, ca.1920	Kent, Frederick W. (Frederick Wallace), 1894-1984	1920	Boys; Examinations; Nurses	University of Iowa; Iowa Child Welfare Research Station	United States -- Iowa -- Iowa City	1920-1930	Still image	Photograph
	cd07-0006.jpg				University of Iowa; Iowa Child Welfare Research Station	United States -- Iowa -- Iowa City		Still image	Photograph
	cd07-0007.jpg	Wallace), 1894-1984			University of Iowa; Iowa Child Welfare Research Station	United States -- Iowa -- Iowa City		Still image	Photograph
	cd07-0008.jpg	Kent, Frederick W. (Frederick Wallace), 1894-1984			University of Iowa; Iowa Child Welfare Research Station	United States -- Iowa -- Iowa City		Still image	Photograph
	cd07-0009.jpg	Kent, Frederick W. (Frederick Wallace), 1894-1984			University of Iowa; Iowa Child Welfare Research Station	United States -- Iowa -- Iowa City		Still image	Photograph
	cd07-0010.jpg	Kent, Frederick W. (Frederick Wallace), 1894-1984			University of Iowa; Iowa Child Welfare Research Station	United States -- Iowa -- Iowa City		Still image	Photograph
	cd07-0011.jpg	Kent, Frederick W. (Frederick Wallace), 1894-1984			University of Iowa; Iowa Child Welfare Research Station	United States -- Iowa -- Iowa City		Still image	Photograph

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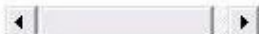


Railroad depots and stations on the Union Pacific Railroad line mid 1800s to early 1900s

- leo00047-01
- leo00047-02
- leo00047-03
- leo00047-04
- leo00047-05
- leo00047-06
- leo00047-07
- leo00047-08
- leo00047-09
- leo00047-10
- leo00047-11
- Front
- Back
- leo00047-12
- leo00047-13



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Page Description

**Title** [Railroad depots and stations on the Union Pacific Railroad line mid 1800s to early 1900s](#)  
**Type (AAT)** [Photographs](#)  
**Digital Collection** [Levi O. Leonard Railroadiana](#)  
[Abraham Lincoln Collection](#)

Document Description

**Title** [Railroad depots and stations on the Union Pacific Railroad line mid 1800s to early 1900s](#)  
**Date Original** 18--; 19--  
**Topical Subject (LCTGM)** [Explosions](#)

## Describing special collections: Take a page from the archivists

- **Stop obsessing about items.** Everything that is digitized does not need to be painstakingly described
- **Embrace archival collection management strategy:** manage collections and hierarchies, not necessarily items
- Start at the top, at the collection level, then think how to group materials, **stressing the *relationships* between the materials**
- While **serious researchers** value the description and organization that we bring to collections, after they've discovered a useful resource, they're **willing to contact us should they need more detail**

-- Erway & Schaffner. *Shifting Gears: Gearing Up to Get Into the Flow* (OCLC: 2007)  
<http://www.oclc.org/research/publications/library/2007/2007-02.pdf>

## Quality vs. quantity: Quantity wins!

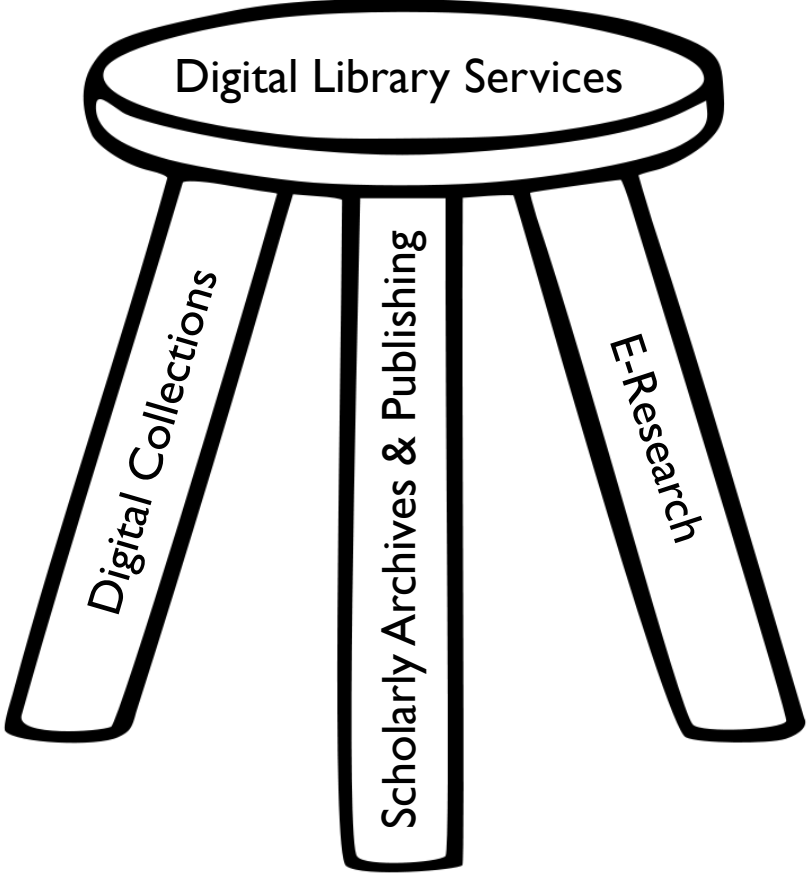
- **Well-intentioned efforts** (highly detailed description, boutique curation of compelling collections) have contributed to the risk of **marginalization of primary sources**
- **Vast quantities of digitized primary materials will trump a few superbly crafted special collections**
- **Minimal description will not restrict use** as much as limiting access to those who can show up in person
- Instead of focusing on measuring cataloger's output, we should put more effort into **measuring the impact on users, then direct efforts to enhance content** (more exhaustive scanning, higher quality scans, more detailed metadata, text conversion) to the most in-demand material

-- Erway & Schaffner. *Shifting Gears: Gearing Up to Get Into the Flow* (OCLC: 2007)  
<http://www.oclc.org/research/publications/library/2007/2007-02.pdf>

## Cataloging economics: Alternate definitions of quality

- **Cataloging librarians: conformance to bibliographic control standards**
- **Library decision-makers: return on investment**
  - Maintain a balance between what comes in for processing and what is completed
  - Important new initiatives successfully budgeted and staffed
  - Funders and end users satisfied
- **End users: personal control over their access to information**
  - Library web sites' enabling users to find information on their own
  - Remote access to print and e-journal collections

-- Calhoun, Karen. *Economics and Organization of Bibliographic Data* (OCLC: 2007)  
[http://www.loc.gov/bibliographic-future/meetings/LC\\_WG\\_Bibliographic\\_Control\\_Briefing-Calhoun\\_1.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/bibliographic-future/meetings/LC_WG_Bibliographic_Control_Briefing-Calhoun_1.pdf)



# Reformatting to Preservation Dept.

- Conservation and handling expertise in Preservation
- Frees Digital Library Services staff for growing e-Research faculty partnerships



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# Logistical Issues

- Existing workload in Preservation
- Workflow and communication between departments



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# Cultural Issues

- Scanning for Access vs. Preservation
- Delivery and Display decisions



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Slideshow:

[http://ir.uiowa.edu/lib\\_pubs/62](http://ir.uiowa.edu/lib_pubs/62)