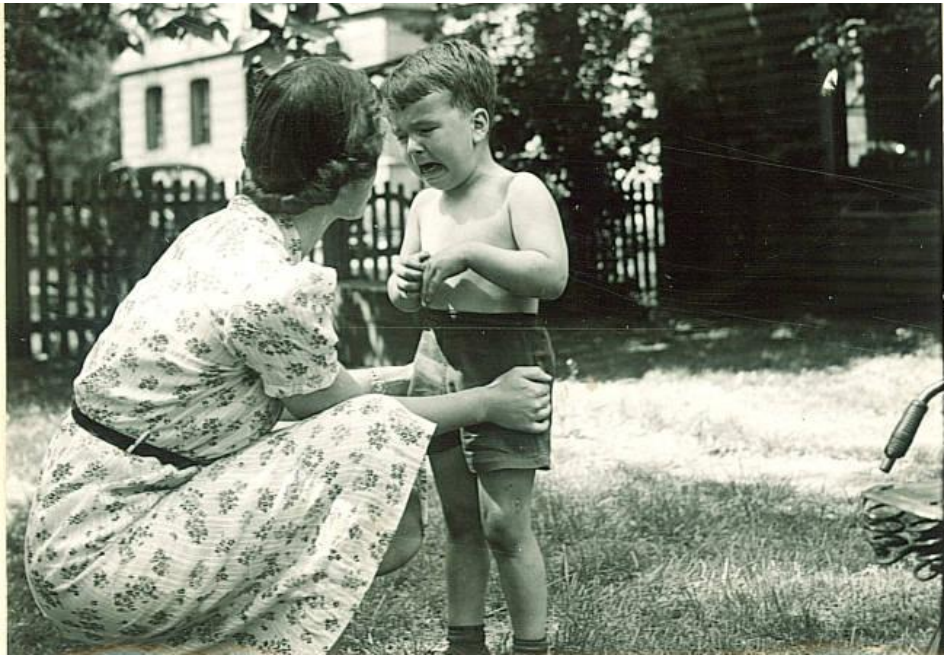


Digital Library Growing Pains:

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

images Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, 1917-1974 http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/ictcs/icwrs.html

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

images Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, 1917-1974 http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/ictcs/icwrs.html

Mass digitization

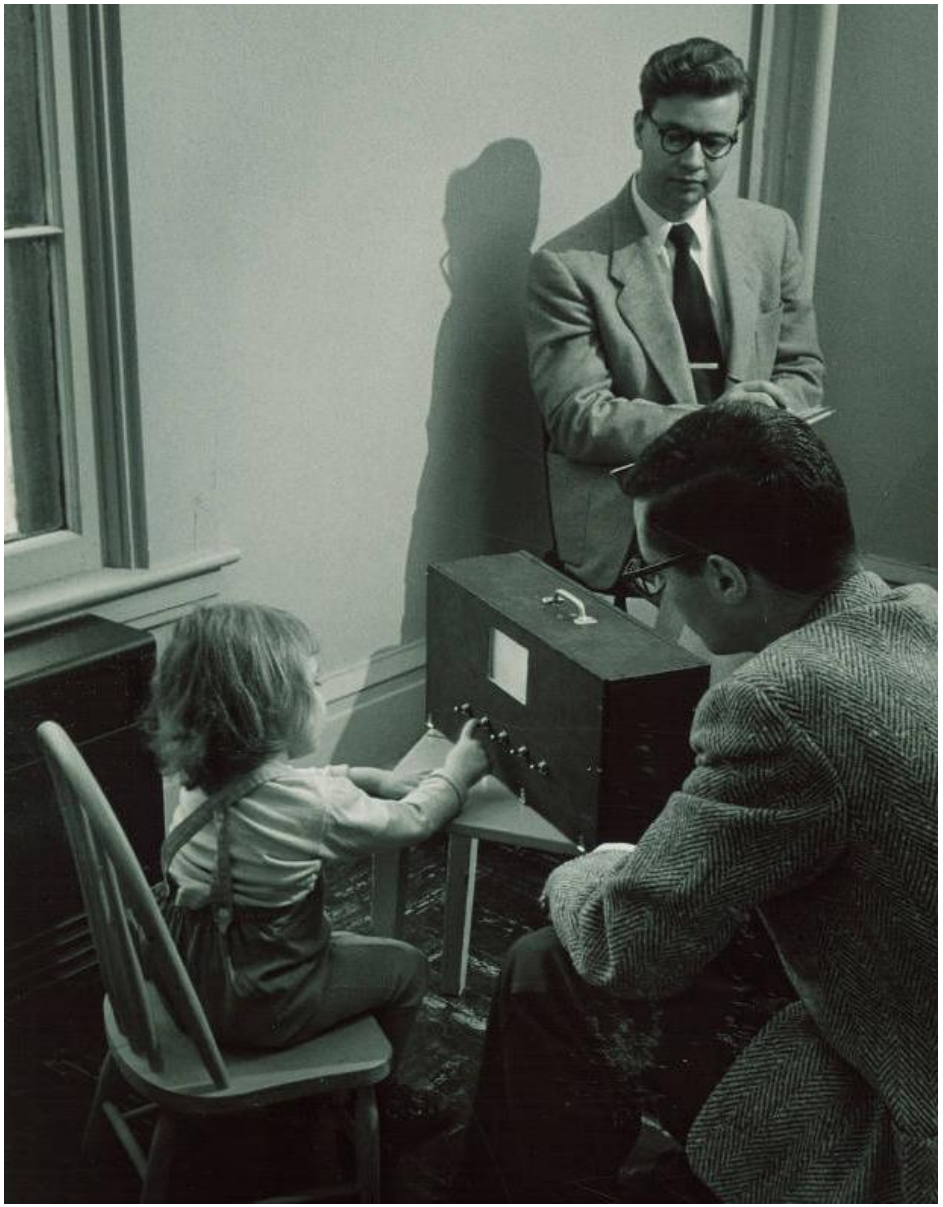
- ≠ web exhibit
- comprehensive scholarly resource
- issues of scale

images Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, 1917-1974 http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/ictcs/icwrs.html

Technical Services

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

images Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, 1917-1974 http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/ictcs/icwrs.html



Preferred

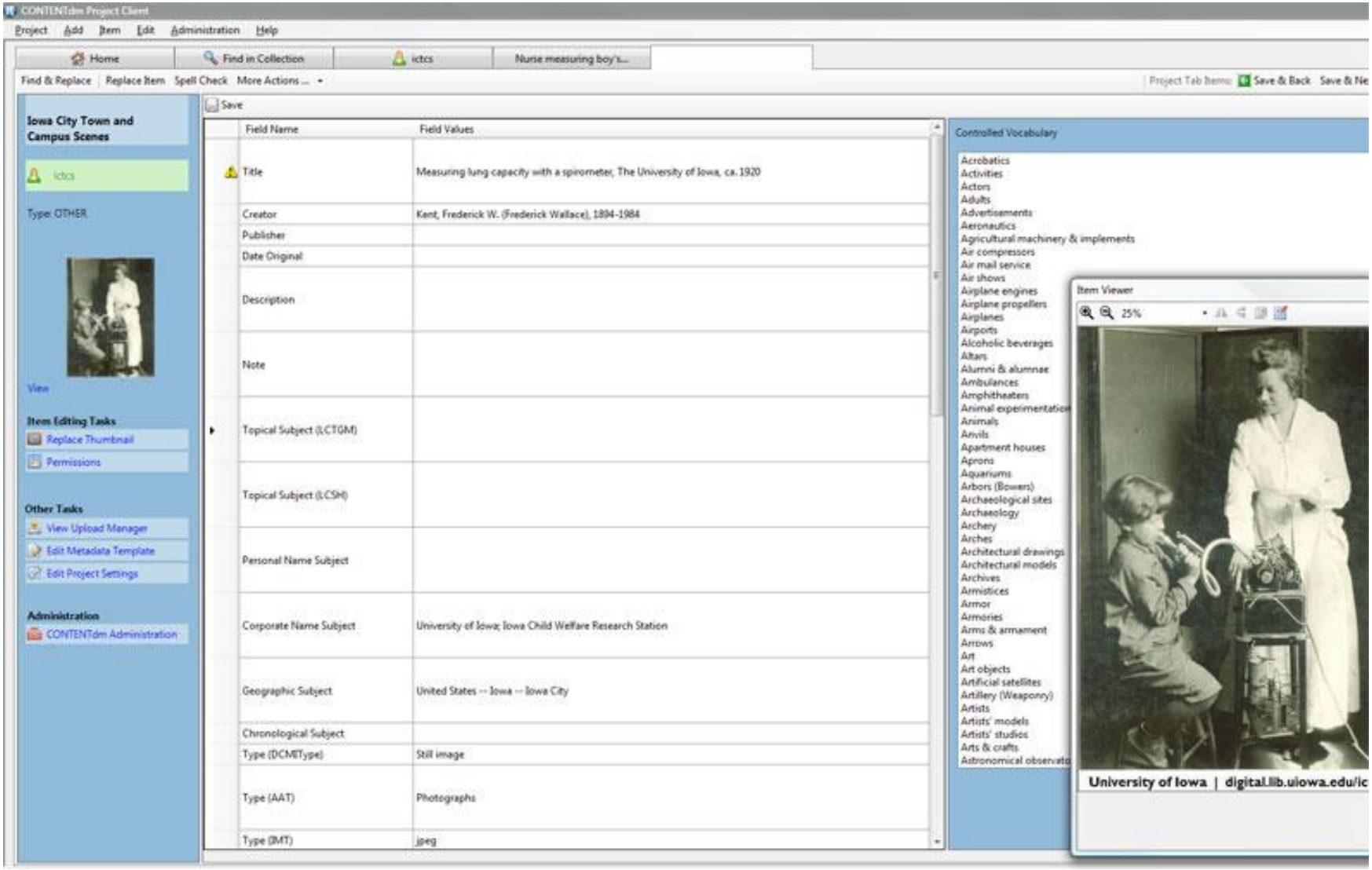
- comfortable with a range of technology
- tolerance for ambiguity
- healthy disregard for organizational hierarchy

images Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, 1917-1974 http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/ictcs/icwrs.html

"Make it work" a.k.a. revise the old

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

images Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, 1917-1974 http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/ictcs/icwrs.html



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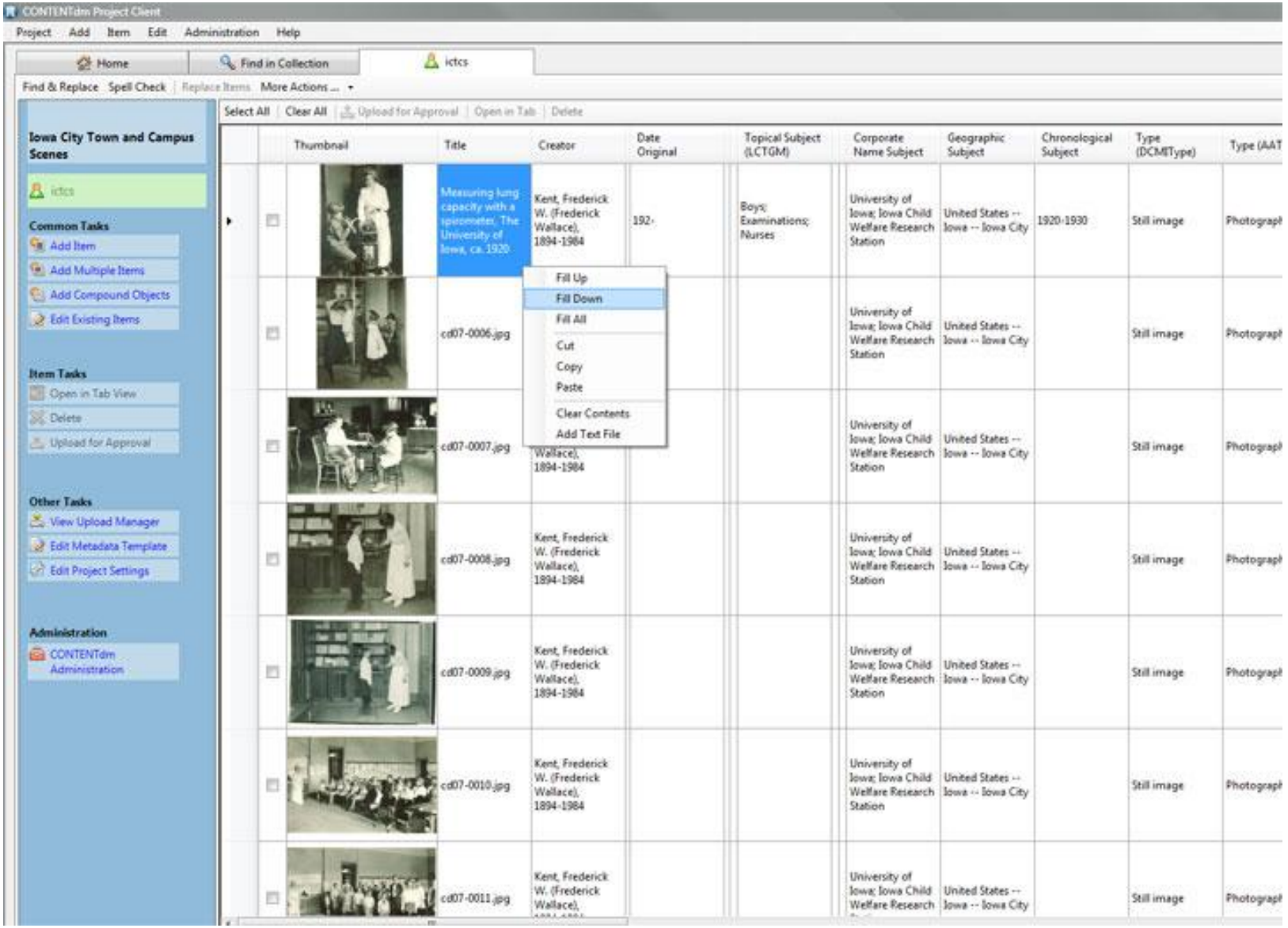

images Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, 1917-1974 http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/ictcs/icwrs.html

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

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

University of Iowa | digital.lib.uiowa.edu/leonard

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

images Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, 1917-1974 http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/ictcs/icwrs.html

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

images Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, 1917-1974 http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/ictcs/icwrs.html

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

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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

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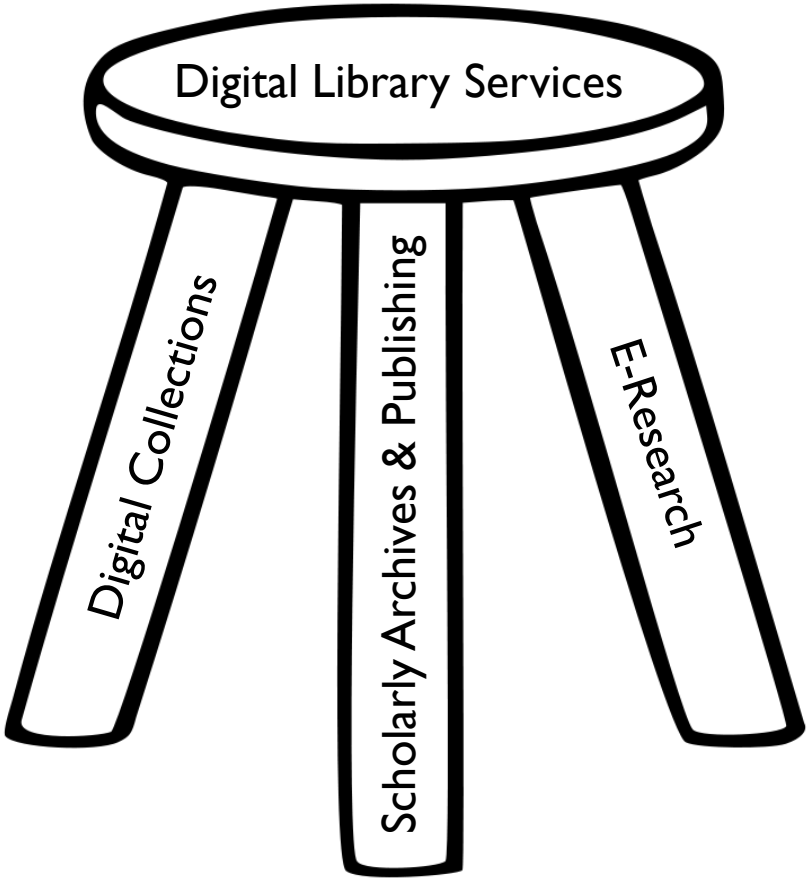
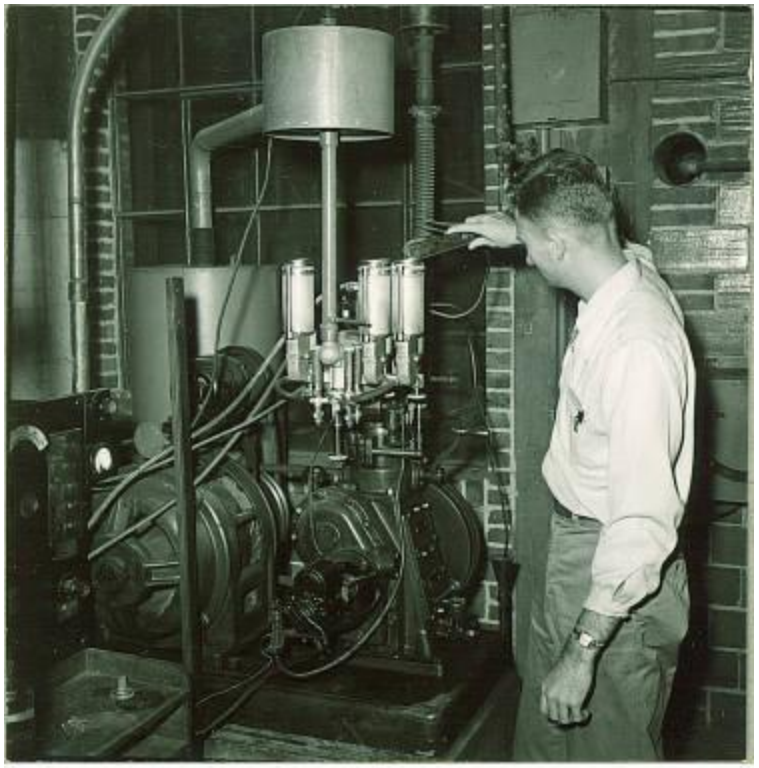

Digital Library Services
Digital Collections
Scholarly Archives & Publishing
E-Research

Reformatting to Preservation Dept.

- Conservation and handling expertise in Preservation

- Frees Digital Library Services staff for growing e-Research faculty partnerships



images Iowa City Town and Campus Scenes http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/ictcs

Logistical Issues

- Existing workload in Preservation

- Workflow and communication between departments

images Iowa City Town and Campus Scenes http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/ictcs

Cultural Issues

- Scanning for Access vs. Preservation

- Delivery and Display decisions

images Iowa City Town and Campus Scenes http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/ictcs

Slideshow:

http://ir.uiowa.edu/lib_pubs/62