

Title: Digitization Considerations
 (Formerly: Deciding how an item should be scanned or photographed)

Purpose: Considerations for how an item should be digitized.

For: Digital Lab Staff

Maintained by: Digital Lab Manager

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Introduction

There are several key points to consider in making decisions about how an item should be scanned or photographed. The considerations below include guiding questions that can help one think through the decisions regarding what is best and safest for the materials as well as the personnel handling them. There are times when the safest way to digitize materials is not to digitize at all. See the Digitization Guidelines for equipment explanations and settings.

Type of Material

- Does the type of material suggest that the item should be scanned or photographed with a particular type of equipment?
 - i.e. Paper, film (positive or negative), photograph, artwork, video, audio, 3-D object, 2-D objects like textiles, items of mixed materials (Ex: scrapbooks, or pages with both text and images), glass negative

Condition

- Does the condition of the object suggest that the item should be scanned or photographed with a particular type of equipment?
- Does it need to be cleaned?
- Does it need special handling?
- Is it flat or has it bowed (a particular problem with photographs, which shouldn't just be slapped on the scanner and flattened that way)?
- Does the item need to be protected from light or heat in any way?
- Does the item off gas or pose a threat in any way?

Size

- Does the size of the object suggest that the item should be scanned or photographed with a particular type of equipment?
- Are all the objects you want to digitize the same size? (If they are, and they aren't fragile, you can use a document feeder, but that's not usually an option in an archive.)

Bound, Mounted, or Framed

- Is the item bound, mounted, or framed in some way that would make one type of imaging equipment more viable than another?
- Can it be unbound, unmounted, or unframed for image capture?

Color

- Does the color of the object suggest that the item should be scanned or photographed with a particular type of equipment or in a particular way?
- Is there any color at all in the object?
- Is the color due to aging or deterioration?
- How important is this color information to your final product? (i.e. For book typescripts marked with Faulkner's changes in color, the color information might be important.)

Tonal Range

- Does the tonal range of the item suggest that the item should be scanned or photographed with a particular type of equipment or in a particular way? You may choose to scan items with continuous tone (like a photo) differently than high contrast items (like a typical typescript).

Artifact vs. Content

- Are you interested in digitizing the item for its value as an object or for the value of its content? (i.e., do you want to preserve the "feel" of the archival item, or just provide access to the content, or both?)
- What is the smallest amount of detail in the object that needs to be shown?

Intellectual Property/Privacy Issues

- Has permission been given to make this item publically available or does it need to be restricted?
- Are there parts of the item that need to be blocked out to protect privacy in some way?
- Will the access image need to be watermarked in some way to indicate ownership or copyright?