

The State of Digital Libraries in Indiana and a Vision for the Future

December 2003
REVISED December 17, 2003

Kristine Brancolini, Indiana University
Andrea Bean Hough, Indiana State Library

Indiana's libraries, archives, and museums are the stewards of the state's rich cultural heritage. For more than 100 years, these institutions have served the needs of the state's citizens for information and recreation. Today, information technology and the development of the Internet provide new methods for making these materials more readily available to citizens of the state and users beyond our borders.

VISION STATEMENT

We envision the Digital Library of Indiana, a resource that provides online access to the cultural and historical resources of the state on Indiana. The Digital Library of Indiana will be a gateway to Indiana's history and culture found in digitized books, manuscripts, photographs, newspapers, audio, video, and other materials. This digital library is made possible through the collaborative efforts of Indiana's libraries, archives, museums, and other institutions of cultural heritage to develop, maintain, and preserve digital collections and online digital resources. Digital objects will be created, maintained, delivered, and preserved according to national standards. Users at all levels of education, from kindergarten through post-secondary education and beyond, will find a rich array on online educational materials. Teachers will be skilled in their use in the classroom and students will use them in curriculum-related assignments.

This is our vision, but what is the reality?

Fragmented nature of digitization in Indiana

Indiana has an active and engaged digital library community. However, it is small and uncoordinated. Digitization projects usually serve local needs and few are considered to be part of a larger digital library effort. Projects are often unrelated and do not provide for a growing, directed, digital library for Hoosiers. Unlike the statewide projects in North Carolinaⁱ, Georgiaⁱⁱ, Californiaⁱⁱⁱ, Maryland,^{iv} and Colorado^v, among others, there is no one-stop shopping for digital collections in Indiana. If a customer wants to find historic photographs of Muncie, they can guess who might have the photographs, they can "Google" the topic, and she may locate the Middletown Digital Archives project at Ball State University (see below). But will Google retrieve all relevant images?

Several university libraries in Indiana have developed digital library programs and undertaken digitization projects. Indiana University's Digital Library Program is the

clear leader within the state in the area of digitization, in the size and scope of the projects tackled, the resources available for digitization, staff knowledge and skills, and ability to attract substantial outside funding.^{vi} IUPUI has produced The Online Atlas of Central Indiana.^{vii} The University of Notre Dame has several digitization projects, including seven projects from their Rare Books and Special Collections program.^{viii} Among other projects, Purdue University has digitized portions of its Amelia Earhart collection.^{ix} Ball State University has digitized thousands of photographs for its Middletown Digital Archives project.^x

Many public libraries have digitized photographs, card file indexes, and other resources in the areas of local history and genealogy. Leaders include the Allen County Public Library, the Vigo County Public Library, and the Kokomo-Howard County Public Library.

INCOLSA has gathered links for some of the digital library collections in Indiana on its *Hoosier Heritage* web site^{xi}. This list includes an array of projects focused primarily on genealogy and local history. Although these resources may be heavily used by genealogists and local users, they do not meet the educational needs described in our vision statement. Furthermore, none of these collections or indexes may be searched simultaneously. Many of the digitization projects do not adhere to digital library standards or recommended best practices; most lack the documentation necessary to determine exactly how projects were accomplished. Many lack descriptive metadata. Many of the web sites that deliver the materials offer limited functionality.

Despite the progress in some libraries, Indiana lacks any plan for the development of a large-scale digital library dedicated to our cultural heritage and history. What are some of the requirements for building high-quality, functional digital library collections?

- Needs assessment
What do the citizens of Indiana want to see from our collections? How do they want to access them? How do we select collections for digitization? Should we focus on archival materials or published resources (books and journals)?
- Adherence to digital library standards
What are appropriate digital library standards for our projects? How can we share information about appropriate standards?
- Digital infrastructure
What systems are needed to store and manage digital objects and their metadata? Will this infrastructure be centralized or decentralized?
- Efficient use of resources, including hardware, software, and staff
Is it practical for every library to own digitization equipment and software? How might we consolidate digitization services, perhaps regionally?

- Coordination of efforts
How can we work together to help institutions move forward in creating the Digital Library of Indiana? How can we organize to cooperate rather than compete for funding? How can larger, more experienced institutions work with smaller, less experienced institutions?
- Education and training of staff
What kind of digital library education and training do we need, both to create digital collections and to use them? How do we train teachers and librarians to promote the effective use of digital resources in the classroom and in lifelong learning? What is the best way to deliver this education and training? How do we pay for them?
- A single portal for access to Indiana-related resources
How do we fund a statewide portal of Indiana-related resources? What can we learn from other states? Are there clear models? How do we federate access to existing and planned digital collections? Is the solution a single repository, hosted centrally? Is the solution a metadata harvesting service? Is it a combination of the two?

Plan for the future

In order to begin the work needed to answer these questions and begin moving forward to create the Digital Library of Indiana, we need to make decisions in four critical areas:

1. We need central leadership.

Overall, leadership must come from the Indiana State Library, as it is the only entity in the state with a broad base of working relationships with the many libraries, archives, museums, and other cultural heritage institutions in the state. Indiana University should lead the technical planning and infrastructure development for the Digital Library of Indiana.

2. We need a plan.

Creating the Digital Library of Indiana will be an immense undertaking. It will require careful planning over an extended period of time, probably close to one year. This funding should come from a governmental source, such as LSTA.

3. We need state funding.

The start-up costs and ongoing maintenance of the Digital Library of Indiana will be substantial. The costs cannot be born by the individual libraries, archives, and museums alone. Grants from a number of sources may be used to digitize collections and some individual institutions will be providing ongoing support for their own collections. However, the Digital Library of Indiana will benefit all citizens of the state and thus,

should be funded by them. In order to build support for funding through the legislature, we should appoint an advisory board that includes influential public figures in Indiana.

4. **We must build on existing strengths in digital library development.**

Few institutions in the state have experience in the development and maintenance of digital library collections and services. These institutions in the state should lead the planning efforts, consulting broadly with representative bodies. We propose the formation of a small steering committee to write the proposal for a planning project to explore options and make recommendations for the future.

ⁱ See <http://www.ncecho.org/>

ⁱⁱ <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.cdlib.org/>

^{iv} See <http://www.mdch.org/>

^v See <http://www.cdpheritage.org/>

^{vi} See <http://www.dlib.indiana.edu/collections/>

^{vii} <http://atlas.ulib.iupui.edu/>

^{viii} See <http://www.rarebooks.nd.edu/digital/>

^{ix} See <http://www.lib.purdue.edu/aearhart/>

^x See <http://www.bsu.edu/libraries/virtualpress/archives/index.html>

^{xi} <http://www.incolsa.net/heritage/>