



Gorffennol Digidol Digital Past - 2021

EXPANDING THE DIMENSIONS OF DIGITIZATION: The Smithsonian Experience

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Founded in 1864, the Smithsonian Institution is the world's largest research, museum, and education complex. It houses over 154 million objects/specimens of cultural, historic, and scientific importance in 19 museums, 9 research institutes, numerous botanical gardens, and a national zoo.

The scale and diversity of the Smithsonian's collections present a unique digitization challenge. From its earliest digitization efforts in the 1970s, the Smithsonian continues to evolve its digitization strategies, methods, and policies to meet the challenge, and to position its digital collections for future needs. An important step in these efforts took place in 2009, with the creation of the Digitization Program Office (DPO).

The DPO's mandate - to work across the Smithsonian to increase the quality, quantity, and impact of Smithsonian digitized collections - is implemented through two programs: mass digitization and 3D digitization. Over the years, as both programs' teams have acquired expertise, they have confronted a number of changing circumstances, and continue to adapt to meet the moment. For the 3D program, this means creating robust infrastructure to automate the resource-intensive aspects of 3D digitization, and provide tools that enhance content creation, management, authoring, and delivery of 3D assets. For the mass digitization program, it means rethinking their workplan (as pandemic-induced closures now restrict physical access to collections), shifting from object imaging to digital records creation and data enrichment.

In February of 2020, the Smithsonian implemented an open access policy that transforms our mission. The Smithsonian Open Access Initiative currently makes three million digital collections assets available as CC0, i.e., available for any use, free of charge, without permission. Open access expands Smithsonian digitization to its fullest dimensions, making it integral to the Institution's efforts to reach broader, more diverse audiences, on their terms.

Biography

Diane Zorich is director of the Smithsonian Institution's Digitization Program Office where she leads an expert team in digitizing Smithsonian collections to maximize their impact for the public. She oversees mass digitization, 3D digitization, and assessment activities that develop and improve digitization processes across the Institution. Before joining the Smithsonian, she was a consultant with over two decades of experience in information management, digitization, and digital policy in cultural organizations.