

**Draft 4/10/08**  
**For Discussion Purposes Only**

***Discussion Paper***

***NEW YORK DIGITAL COLLECTION INITIATIVE***

A Collaborative Project of New York's Libraries, Archives, Historical Records Repositories,  
Museums, and Public Broadcasting

*"New Yorkers preserving the past and creating the future"*

**Goal:** To create a statewide digital collection of cultural heritage resources and a framework to promote the use of digital technologies to broaden and enhance access to New York's approximately 10,000 local, regional, and state cultural heritage institutions, including those located in colleges, universities, and local governments.

**Partners:** This project, under the leadership of the Regents Advisory Council on Libraries, currently is seeking full project partnership with the following groups: The State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB), the Museum Association of New York (MANY), the Association of Public Broadcasting Stations of New York (ABPSNY), and the NY3RS. Additional partners are welcome.

**Background:** At present, New York has a number of excellent local and regional digitization models, such as The New York Public Library's *Digital Library* ([www.nypl.org/digital/digital\\_about.htm](http://www.nypl.org/digital/digital_about.htm)), the *Hudson River Valley Heritage* ([www.hrvh.org](http://www.hrvh.org)), *Suffolk Historic Newspapers* (<http://shn.suffolk.lib.ny.us>), University at Buffalo's *UBdigit* (<http://ubdigit.buffalo.edu>), and *Westchester County's Virtual Archives* (<http://westchesterarchives.com/home.html>). New York also has a number of institutions with long and valuable experience with digitization, such as Cornell University, that can help to ensure the model built for the New York Digital Collection meets current and developing standards. Models in other states and regions around the nation include North Carolina's *ECHO, Exploring Cultural Heritage Online* ([www.ncecho.org](http://www.ncecho.org)); *Ohio Memory* ([www.ohiomeomory.org](http://www.ohiomeomory.org)); *MOAC: Museum and Online Archives of California* (<http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/moac/search.html>); the *Collaborative Digitization Program* ([www.cdpheritage.org](http://www.cdpheritage.org)); *Calisphere* (<http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/>); and *The Portal to Texas History* (<http://texashistory.unt.edu>).

**Project Benefits:** Teachers, students of all ages, parents, college faculty, scholars, businesses, government officials, health care professionals, historians, genealogists, authors, community planners, hobbyists, and all New Yorkers will benefit from 24/7 access to quality, state-of-the-art digital collections and resources in New York State's cultural institutions. Librarians, archivists, museum curators, local historians, and public broadcasting staff will benefit from high-quality consultation services, training, standards, and best practices, and will acquire the collaborative tools they need to digitize and share local collections.

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The New York Digital Collection Initiative will also reveal the treasures of the state to the general public through the Internet. Researchers of all ages will be able to make connections between collections never evident before, breaking down barriers that may exist between cultural collecting agencies. The potential for linking digital collections with online tools to help teachers, parents, and students support New York State Learning Standards and improve student achievement is limitless.

**Project Scope:** Numerous aspects of such a project require thoughtful consideration and elaboration. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *Access:* (Question for discussion: What are the technical considerations involved in making the digital collection readily accessible in a range of institutions that may have varying levels of sophistication in technology?)
- *Content Creation:* (Questions for discussion: What are the appropriate specific topical areas to focus on in building a rich resource, particularly to support the P-16 curriculum, other educational uses, and lifelong learning? How much should be defined in advance, and what “local choices” should be possible, particularly for grant-funded projects?)
- *Collaboration:* (Questions for discussion: How can libraries, archives, museums, historical repositories, and public television most effectively interact in building the digital collection? What means of organization and management are needed? How can statewide and regional partnerships enhance the digitization effort?)
- *Standards and Guidelines:* (Questions for discussion: What types of technical and content standards are necessary to ensure the quality of images, their retrievability for users, and the facility of sharing and maintaining information?)
- *Training:* (Questions for discussion: What types of training will potential contributing institutions need, e.g., how to select items for inclusion, digitize, select vendors, create metadata? What types of training will users need, e.g., teachers, scholarly researchers, genealogists, community historians?)
- *Funding and Sustainability:* (Question for discussion: What are the extent and types of resources needed to create the digital collection, support its growth over time, and ensure its development and viability as technology changes?)
- *Marketing and Advocacy:* (Questions for discussion: To whom should this resource be marketed? What are the best routes for reaching appropriate audiences? What is the best way to promote the initiative to achieve funding and support and make the case to resource allocators?)
- *Preservation:* (Question for discussion: What are the best means of ensuring that the digital images created will be maintained electronically and remain usable over time?)

**Core Concepts:** The New York Digital Collection Initiative is based on a number of collaborative, coordinated approaches to digitization throughout New York State. These concepts and initiatives include the following:

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- Increasing access to local, regional, and state history to support P-16 education and lifelong learning.
- Expanding access to materials in New York's cultural institutions through the creation of online content.
- Helping cooperating institutions to create online content; prepare online finding aids; establish partnerships; incorporate Web cataloging or metadata into digitization projects; develop curricula related to digital collections; and showcase projects for replication.
- Providing an online compilation of licensed authoritative research resources and collections, including educational video titles and clips.
- Encouraging partnerships among cultural institutions throughout the state in a statewide initiative to create the New York Digital Collection.
- Ensuring compliance with and dissemination of information on existing or emerging national and international standards and other appropriate quality benchmarks.
- Serving as the platform for State Library, State Archives, State Museum, and Public Broadcasting digitization projects and training.
- Providing direct training and training grants for a full range of continuing education opportunities for participating institutions throughout the state.
- Serving as a portal and clearinghouse for related training, funding, and other digitization opportunities.
- Providing a funding source to support digitization efforts by local cultural institutions as well as major research institutions.
- Marketing the project to educational and cultural institutions, other repositories related to cultural heritage, funding agencies, and the general public.
- Establishing a means and a system for long-term preservation of digital collections, assuring access to New York State's history in digital form.

**Project Structure:** The New York Digital Collection will build on successful local and regional digitization work, pulling together diverse collections for easy access and use through a user-friendly Web portal. State investment in this ambitious new program will provide all New Yorkers with quick, easy, and free digital access to rare and unique historical treasures and documents, a vast online collection of authoritative research resources, a wide assortment of educational video titles and clips, and related online teaching tools for teachers and parents.

To proceed in a systematic way, the initiative will be implemented in multiple phases:

Phase One, "A Sustainable Digital Collection Model for New York State," will include the following actions:

- Meetings of project partners and key stakeholders with national experts to obtain guidance, stimulate innovation, and identify possible models for the initiative.

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- Designing and implementing a flexible and collaborative framework that can incorporate and interconnect a variety of different platforms (e.g., CONTENTdm and DSpace), commercial digital resources, and existing local and regional digital resources and collections. The model for the New York Digital Collection should support multiple text, graphic, and video formats, and should enable the long-term preservation of digital collections for future generations.
- With the assistance of national experts and a newly established advisory group, development of statewide standards, sharing of best practices, and training.

Subsequent phases will include grants to local and regional entities to add new digital content and conduct training, the purchase of additional statewide licenses for authoritative content and video materials, development of online teaching tools tied to the state learning standards, and web archiving.