To Outsource or Not to Outsource

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ABOUT BHS

• Founded in 1863 as a private club and library as the Long Island Historical Society
• In 1985, the name was changed to Brooklyn Historical Society
• Became an educational center, a museum, and a research library
About BHS Collections

• Fine art, Works on paper
• Artifacts
• Maps
• Published materials
• Archival papers and records
• Photographs
• Oral histories
• Motion picture film and videos
Reasons we digitize

- Research Library
  - Commercial uses
  - Scholarly publications and presentations
  - Research purposes
  - Personal uses
  - Staff uses
  - For preservation purposes
Reasons we digitize

• Exhibiting Museum
  – Enlarged copies or output of collection items
  – Replacements for fragile items that cannot be displayed

• Education Center
  – Curriculum guides
  – Interpretive websites
  – Print materials for teachers, tours, classes
Prioritizing Digitization

- Research value
- Existing metadata
- Condition
- Rarity
Digitization Preference

• By collection primarily
  – Ensures more systematic, consistent metadata creation
  – Economic use of intern or paid staff person’s time
  – Good planning, part of existing cataloging activities

• Research requests only
  – A lot of work/research that doesn’t balance out financially
  – Cannot plan for storage with this method of digitization
Digitization Policy

• Financial considerations
• Item characteristics
  – Size  – Condition
  – Format  – Quantity
• Immediate use of digital surrogate
  – Exhibition  – Archival preservation
  – Research  – Promotional/Retail
In-house digitization

• John D. Morrell photographs
  – Grant-funded, but still limited funding
  – Metadata required cleanup, but was rich
  – Unique collection
  – Filled a research need we expected to capitalize on to fund future projects
  – Was a catalyst and a tactic to get the institution on board with this type of digitizing
  – We went online with this collection
In-house digitization

• CHART IMLS Grant
  – Students learning how to digitize
  – Ample funding
  – Next step in establishing digitization policy

• Research and Staff requests
Outsourced Digitization

• Bernard R. Ratzer Map
  – Worthy of digitization
  – Size and condition = outsourced
  – Complicated process to digitize (NYT)

• Fine art and cased photographs
  – Framed paintings
  – Daguerreotypes
Outcomes for out-sourced digitizing

• Pros:
  – Leasing equipment and expertise
  – Quality
  – Planning for single-item digitization not necessary

• Cons:
  – Cost per item is high
  – Slower turn around
  – Digitize less
Outcomes to in-house digitizing

• Pros:
  – Cost to scan per item is less after initial investment
  – With staff, potential to scan great quantities is good
  – Turn-around can be quick
  – All profits go to the house
  – Can monitor and adjust storage needs as you go

• Cons:
  – Financial investment is high -- must maintain equipment
  – Digitizing capabilities dependent upon staff expertise
Vendor Relationships

• Be straight with your vendor about your knowledge and skill set
• Your work order should be clear
• Establish a working relationship with a vendor to reap the benefits
  – Benefits workflow
  – Discounts
  – Trust
Conclusion

• Every repository is different – not everyone outsources, nor should they
• Know the limitations of your staff and your institution
• Establishing a good relationship with your vendor can be very rewarding
Storage

• Gowanus is our 3TB server
• Currently has 916GB free
• Currently using 1522GB

• FADGI guidelines for scanning