DIGITAL STRATEGY

The FY2019–2023 Digital Strategic Plan of the Library of Congress

Version 1.0; October 1, 2018

LIBRARY
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

INTRODUCTION

The Library of Congress's mission is to engage, inspire, and inform the Congress and the American people with a universal and enduring source of knowledge and creativity. To accomplish that mission, the Library is adopting a digital-forward strategy that harnesses technology to bridge geographical divides, expand our reach, and enhance our services. This document describes how we will secure the Library's position in an increasingly digital world as we realize our vision that **all Americans are connected to the Library of Congress**.

The Digital Strategy complements the Library's 2019-2023 strategic plan, *Enriching the User Experience*, which enumerates four high-level goals: **expand access, enhance services, optimize resources, and measure results.** The Digital Strategy describes what the Library plans to accomplish, in terms of digital transformation, over the next five years to achieve these goals. The transformation we describe below applies to all of the Library's programs, including our collections, researcher services, the United States Copyright Office, the Congressional Research Service, and the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

Digital technology enables us to sustain and expand services to all users, bridging gaps and strengthening connections. The Digital Strategy describes how we will use each interaction as an opportunity to move users along a path from awareness, to discovery, to use, and finally to a connection with the Library through three main goals: **throwing open the treasure chest**, **connecting**, and **investing in our future**.

WE WILL THROW OPEN THE TREASURE CHEST

WE WILL CONNECT

WE WILL INVEST IN OUR FUTURE

WE WILL THROW OPEN THE TREASURE CHEST

The Library's content, programs, and expertise are national treasures – we are dedicated to sharing them as broadly as possible. The growth of the Library's digital content, which includes our collections, has increased exponentially every year. We will make that content available and accessible to more people, work carefully to respect the expectations of the Congress and the rights of creators, and support the use of our content in software-enabled research, art, exploration, and learning.

Exponentially grow our collections

The Library will continue to build a universal and enduring source of knowledge and creativity. We will expand our digital acquisitions program, as outlined in *Collecting Digital Content at the Library of Congress;* continue our aggressive digitization program, which prioritizes the Library's unique treasures; and improve search and access services that facilitate discovery of materials in both physical and digital formats.

We will expedite the availability of newly acquired or created content to the web and on-site access systems. This will mean making improvements to the procedures and tools we use to move content from acquisition or creation to access, which will be critical as we continue to experience exponential growth in the size of our digital collection. We will also improve tools to make it easier for Library staff to enhance content after publication, such as adding additional description or information about the conservation of objects.

Maximize the use of content

Promoting creativity and building cultural heritage collections entails protecting creators' intellectual property rights. This responsibility is salient at the Library, as the home of the United States Copyright Office. We will explore creative solutions to reduce the barriers to material while respecting the rights of creators, the desires of our donors, and our other legal and ethical responsibilities.

We publish the rights status of some items and collections, which provides helpful context to those using these materials. We will continue our efforts to make this information machine-readable, associated with individual items, and interoperable with other efforts to make it easier for users to discover rights-free content. Rights assessment requires detailed work by experts; crowdsourcing and machine learning can help us scale. Our program to digitize historic copyright records will make research more convenient to users who want to connect with rights holders for usage permission.

We will expand our ability to provide secure on-site access to rights-restricted digital material, such as our electronic journal collection acquired through eDeposit and digital files in manuscript collections. Additionally, we will build systems that will allow users the maximum authorized access to content, based on their role (e.g., congressional user, staff, or researcher) and on or off-site location. When we implement user authentication, we will do so in a responsible manner, following the library profession's long history of protecting user privacy and confidentiality.

We will increase the discoverability of rights-restricted content so users can better understand what is available on site. This could include offering off-site users additional information to aid in discovery for items not viewable on the open web.

Support emerging styles of research

We will continue to enable computational use of our content and metadata. We currently provide machine-readable access to metadata and items on loc.gov, 25 million downloadable bibliographic records, and the text of 13 million digitized newspaper pages. Providing machine-readable access to our data and enabling computational analysis allows scholars, artists, and others to use the collection in creative ways, including performing content analysis and creating digital artwork. We will continue to invite scholars, artists, journalists, students, and people learning to code to use our resources.

To enable computational analysis, we will prioritize collection readiness by providing more bulk data downloads of content and metadata, improving the usability of the interfaces we publish for programmers, and building more capacity for automated metadata creation, including optical character recognition and speech to text. When the data sets we provide are updated or enhanced, we will make the version information clear to enable reproducibility of research. We will also explore offering tools for non-consumptive data analysis of our content, for example, by offering mechanisms to analyze average sentence lengths of different authors.

WE WILL CONNECT

The Library offers an incredible wealth of content, programs, and services to Congress and the American people. We strive to connect with more users by making those services and content accessible for all.

Inspire a lifelong relationship with every visit

In 2017 we welcomed 115 million visits to our websites. Some of these visitors came to Congress.gov for legislative information and others came to use our online collections. We will deepen our engagement with all online users including those who arrive at our website intending to see only an item or two. We will employ user-centered design to explore how our websites can invite all visitors to more deeply explore our collections, services, publications, and on-site experiences.

Our ability to accomplish a deeper connection with users depends heavily on the strength of our user interfaces. We will emphasize the importance of user experience analysis and continue to make progress toward intuitive search and discovery. We will deliver optimized experiences for large and small screens, including mobile devices, across all of our websites. We prioritize the accessibility of our digital services to all people, inclusive of those with physical disabilities and in communities with low-speed internet access.

In 2017, we hosted more than 1.9 million visitors at the Library's buildings. These visits present opportunities for making stronger connections through increased digital engagement. Visitors' experiences at programs, exhibits, and tours will link them to online services and digital content that they can share with others and access from anywhere.

Bring the Library to our users

Many of the Library's digital users come directly to our websites to discover content. To expose even more people to the Library's content and services, we will bring digital content to users by making more of our material available in other websites and apps that they are already using. Structuring our information to be machine-readable will make the Library's primary source material available to more people in more places and accessible to a broader diversity of users. We will work to broadcast the availability of our machine readable content and make strategic partnerships with those that can use and extend the reach of our content to additional platforms.

Among our most important treasures at the Library are the knowledge and wisdom of our staff. We will empower our staff with tools and pathways to make it easy for them to share stories, standards, expertise, and data with the broadest audience possible. The Library has established social media presences that enable conversation with users and blogs that help us share in-depth stories. We will expand upon these successes by streamlining traditional web publishing and exploring the use of new platforms and formats.

Whether they are congressional staff, academic researchers, teachers, or culturally curious individuals, our users will know that we are here to help them and answer their questions. Over the next five years we will explore emerging technologies to help improve the reach of our expert staff serving users in this capacity.

Welcome other voices

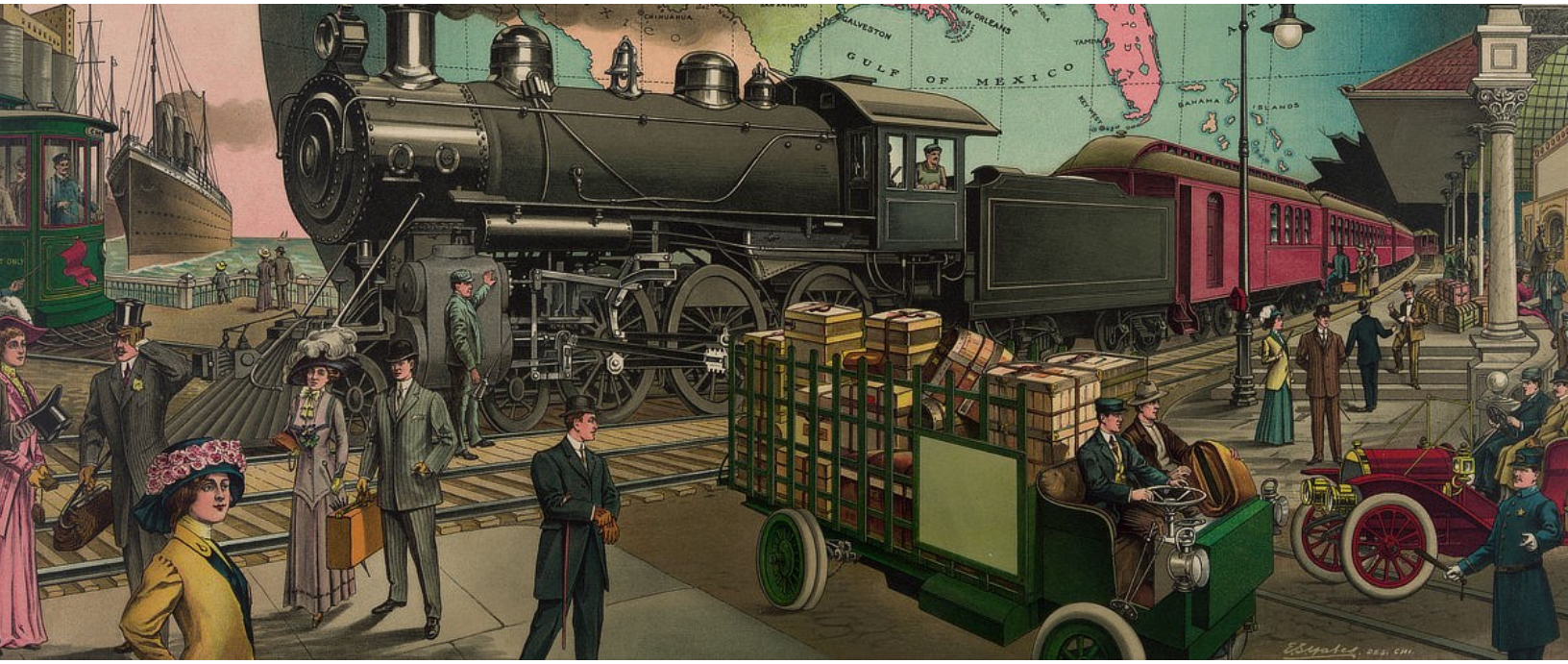
We welcome the knowledge and expertise that others would like to share. Crowdsourcing programs have enriched the context and increased discoverability of Library content. We will expand the availability of crowdsourcing tools to encourage focused public participation in the collective development of cultural memory and to provide text and context that make our content more accessible for all.

The Library is well known for a collection that broadly includes the daily experiences of people around the world. These include collections in the Congressionally designated Veterans History Project, the American Folklife Center, and our web archiving program. New technologies offer expansive potential to broaden and scale the range of methods by which all Americans can contribute their voices to the Library's collections. Web publishing and social media have enabled more people to share their experiences, and, guided by our collection development policies, we will continue to ensure that our collection represents a diversity of voices.

Drive momentum in our communities

We are inspired and guided by the success of our colleagues and peers in other organizations, including cultural heritage institutions and Federal agencies. A traditional strength of libraries is a willingness to work together: when we collaborate, we can achieve together what we cannot accomplish alone. We will continue to participate in professional organizations and cooperatives that expand our perspectives and enable us to share our experiences. Additionally, developing partners in industry can allow us to connect the Library with new areas of expertise and resources.

We will continue to lead and participate in communities developing open formats and standards. We will make our in-house-developed or commissioned software applications open source, and when choosing software, we will heavily weigh the beneficial community effects of using open-source.



WE WILL INVEST IN OUR FUTURE

The Library is dedicated to preserving the wisdom and creativity of past generations, serving our current users, and looking ahead to future needs. We will engage in the active work of preserving our digital collections, safeguarding our content and metadata, and ensuring the usability of what we make available over time. As we protect the past, we also look to the future. In addition to the Library's ongoing investments in IT modernization, we will encourage a culture of continuous learning and capacity for innovation. We will engage with new technologies and communities.

Cultivate an innovation culture

We will cultivate an innovation culture by empowering our staff, who have expertise in a wide range of subject areas, including the work of Congress, United States copyright law, American and foreign law, and our collections. We are deeply motivated to explore new avenues that connect our expertise with users. We will create an environment that enables staff to explore new avenues to achieve the Library's goals by reducing barriers to innovation.

Organizations excel at what they practice, and the Library will make experimentation a core practice. We will ensure that staff have the infrastructure, tools, access to expertise, and institutional support they need to perform their work and try new approaches in an increasingly digital world. We will make the most of our experiments by gathering the evidence necessary to determine whether a bright idea can ultimately become a part of our everyday technology or practice.

We will offer the training, tools, infrastructure, opportunities, and organizational support needed to enable staff to adapt to a changing information landscape. We can expose staff to new ways of working, for example, by encouraging our staff to collaborate with outside experts in digital-forward organizations. We will seek other creative ways to help our staff broaden their perspectives like peer mentoring and training, collaborative workspaces, and encouraging short-term assignments in different departments.

Technology investments will amplify the expertise of our staff and increase our impact. We will find efficiencies that give our staff more time to focus on their intellectual work rather than procedural steps. For example, copyright registration or collections processing might be streamlined through the use of emerging technologies such as computer vision, natural language process, and machine learning. These kind of emerging technologies can provide the basis for next-generation tools to help provide greater discoverability, and reduce the time needed to perform research and analysis.

Ensure enduring access to content

Our plans for the future must entail preserving and protecting our collections and content. We will acquire, manage, and secure the Library's digital content and metadata to support responsible and trustworthy long-term stewardship. Digital media are subject to degradation just like physical materials, and preserving the utility of older computer files requires trained technical expertise. We will ensure that digital items in our collection have a verifiable chain of custody to ensure authenticity as objects are moved between storage media, updated, or migrated between formats. We will continue to investigate and practice methods of emulation and migration to provide continued usability of files and programs as technology evolves.

Build toward the horizon

While we plan for our future, we are also paying close attention to innovations and trends that will present future challenges and opportunities. Newer tools, such as augmented and virtual reality, computer vision, natural language processing, and machine learning, are already transforming how we live and work. We will expand applied research to help the Library understand how to leverage emerging technologies to help connect our users with our resources and content. We will invest in pilots to enable the Library's exploration of emerging technologies. We will monitor emerging trends in digital culture that will impact our operations, including new methods of expression in need of copyright protection and the shift of the creative and historic record increasingly to digital formats.

The goals and priorities presented in the Digital Strategy build upon past digital initiatives and incorporate the forward-looking momentum provided by the Library's Strategic Plan. In the next five years, we will use this document as a tool to share our expertise, connect with more people, and empower our staff to leverage an increasingly digital future to engage, inspire, and inform the Congress and the American people with a universal and enduring source of knowledge and creativity.

ABOUT THE DIGITAL STRATEGY

The Digital Strategy complements the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, which outlines the vision, mission and near-term goals for the Library. Driven by this plan, the Digital Strategy describes what the Library should look like, in terms of its digital transformation, over the next five years, including initiatives that are already in process. Implementation will be governed by Service Unit directional plans, which may involve funding proposals.

Investments to infrastructure are critical to the Digital Strategy and will be addressed in the OCIO Directional Plan. Additionally, the Library's *Collecting Digital Content at the Library of Congress* will determine our acquisition strategy for digital collections.

The FY2019-2023 Digital Strategic Plan of the Library of Congress is available online at: https://www.loc.gov/digital-strategy

Contact us at LC-Labs@loc.gov