DIGITAL LIBRARY FEDERATION

Steering Committee Meeting
28 October 2003

Summary

The Steering Committee of the Digital Library Federation met from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on October 28, 2003, in the Melrose Hotel in Washington, D.C.

In attendance were the following representatives of DLF institutional partners:

California Digital Library: Daniel Greenstein
Carnegie Mellon University: Erika Linke
Columbia University: Patricia Renfro
Cornell University: Sarah Thomas
Council on Library and Information Resources: Richard Detweiler
Dartmouth College: Richard Lucier
Emory University: Linda Matthews
Harvard University: Nancy Cline
Indiana University: Harriette Hemmasi
The Johns Hopkins University: Winston Tabb
Library of Congress: Deanna Marcum
Massachusetts Institute of Technology: Ann Wolpert
National Archives and Records Administration: Kenneth Thibodeau
New York Public Library: Heike Kordish
New York University: Carol Mandel
North Carolina State University: Susan Nutter
Pennsylvania State University: Nancy Eaton
Princeton University: Karin Trainer
Rice University: Chuck Henry
Stanford University: Mike Keller
University of Chicago: Martin Runkle
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: Beth Sandore
University of Michigan: William Gosling
University of Minnesota: Wendy Pratt Lougee
University of Pennsylvania: Michael Winkler
University of Southern California: Deborah Holmes-Wong
University of Tennessee: Anthony Smith
University of Texas at Austin: Fred Heath
University of Virginia: Karin Wittenborg
University of Washington: Lizabeth Wilson
Yale University: Meg Bellinger
The University of California, Berkeley: not represented.

In attendance were the following representatives of DLF allied institutions:

Coalition for Networked Information: Joan Lippincott
OCLC: Lorcan Dempsey
Research Libraries Group: Nancy Elkington
The Los Alamos National Library: not represented.

Attending from the DLF staff were Director David Seaman, Administrative Associate Cassie Lauterette, and Special Projects Associate Gerald George.

Attending as guests were Laura Campbell (Library of Congress) and Clay Shirky (NYU), presenting on the National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program (NDIIPP).

MORNING SESSION

New Members and Representatives

As chairman, Mr. Keller opened the meeting by welcoming representatives of two new institutional members: Chuck Henry of Rice University and Ann Wolpert of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Mr. Keller also welcomed new representatives of four member institutions: Richard Detweiler of the Council on Library and Information Resources, Fred Heath of the University of Texas at Austin, Heike Kordish of the New York Public Library, and Linda Matthews of Emory University.

Plans for a Distributed Open Digital Library (DODL)

Mr. Keller then called upon Ms. Lougee, chair of the DLF's Distributed Library Initiative Committee, to present recommendations from its deliberations on the collaborative creation of a distributed open digital library (tentatively abbreviated as DODL). Steering Committee members had previously received two relevant papers: a report from the Distributed Library Initiative Committee, drafted by Abby Smith, entitled "Distributed Open Digital Library, Realizing the Promise of Digital Libraries," and a background report commissioned from Martha Brogan, entitled, "Digital Library Aggregation Services: a Report to the Digital Library Federation."

Ms. Lougee reported that her committee had advanced beyond last May's tentative proposal for the DODL, to which reaction had been mixed. The earlier proposal had expressed the ideal of deep sharing without being fully formed, and DLF members had urged greater clarity of purpose in the plan with the "content piece front and center." A subsequent planning event, Ms. Lougee said, had brought together DLF members and others with relevant expertise, who discussed a framework for content development focused on the humanities, while recognizing the value of working in parallel on access to make content useful. From the planning event, ideas emerged for strategic partnerships with organizations such as the American Council of Learned Societies. The revised report

of the initiative committee, Ms. Lougee said, proposes three components for the DODL project:

- *building new digital collections*
- *easing the search, discovery, and use of shared collections*
- *specifying the elements of a digital library infrastructure that will enable deeper sharing of resources among and between members.*

Mr. Lucier drew attention to the opening lines of the planning document – "DLF proposes to move digital library development to a new phase, a phase characterized by increasing contributions of content, a deeper context for sharing that content and a more robust architecture for supporting digital services through the creation of a Distributed Open Digital Library" – and observed that what is new in the "new phase" is *collaborative* development. In response to his question—who is the audience for the planning document?—Ms. Lougee said that currently the document was just for DLF members.

Ms. Thomas called for heightened reference in the plan to the importance of preservation. Several participants agreed but, noting that digital preservation is being worked on by others, such as the NDIIPP[1] project at the Library of Congress, and that institutions individually rather than collaboratively must take responsibility for preserving what they create, recommended adding preservation to the plan by reference rather than making work on it a functional requirement for the DODL. However, the transport mechanism to be developed for shared files in the DODL may conceivably involve something that works like the LOCKSS[2] preservation system, which employs redundant content caches that check and support each other.

Ms. Lougee and Mr. Keller opened a discussion of the plan's first component—collection building—by suggesting that the DODL start with the identification and use of material that libraries already have made digitally accessible. The ensuing discussion focused on the feasibility of collaboration among libraries, which have not found collaborating easy even in the print world. Participants observed, however, that some collaborative collection building already has occurred, and as individual libraries see more of what some are making available, more libraries will have more incentive to take part. Also tools will be built to encourage collection development to happen. Nonetheless, it was argued, clarification will be needed about assumptions in the plan, including whether collections are simply to be shared or new collections are to be collaboratively built.

The group then moved to the plan's second component—development of a finding system—which Ms. Lougee said should address both front-end and back-end issues, build on OAI[3] for interoperable collections, and work with institutional partners such as the Coalition for Networked Information to create, as Mr. Keller added, a more comprehensive finding and sharing system. Mr. Seaman observed that the DLF already

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[1] National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Project, a project financed by the Congress of the United States through the Library of Congress.

[2] Lots Of Copies Keep Stuff Safe, a partnership program organized by Stanford University.

[3] The Open Archives Initiative, which has produced a protocol for metadata "harvesting."

had invested in the OAI, and that many DLF members can already offer OAI records for items in their collections. A discussion followed about the achievements and limitations so far of the OAI initiative, leading Mr. Keller to suggest that a good first step in the DODL's development would be to study current efforts at deep sharing and assemble OAI records from DLF institutions willing to contribute them.

The discussion then turned to a question about whether the finding component of the DODL would focus on research or on building a service. Several participants agreed that research on deep sharing would be necessary to make service development possible but that service should be "the driver." Notice then was taken of the need to allow for user-defined collection development, and of the difference between collection and repository services.

At this point Ms. Lougee called attention to proposals of the initiative committee for carrying the DODL forward. One proposal was to recruit focused leadership to coordinate the work and the interaction among participating institutions—"someone will have to live and breathe DODL." Also, she said, at least two working groups will be needed. One would work on content, identifying existing content to pool and engaging in systematic content development. The other would work towards developing an enabling technological infrastructure for the DODL.

The identification of existing content, Mr. Keller said, would include soliciting existing OAI metadata records, which Mr. Greenstein suggested the DLF, as a first step, could help its member institutions learn to develop, where needed. Participants then considered whether making content available for access and organizing it would be two different projects. Ms. Lougee identified different ways in which institutions could participate and called attention to the need to make the project compelling to potential funders. The group also discussed the nature of the work to be done by the proposed technology committee, which might proceed by asking a few institutions with technological expertise to develop working models for deep sharing, using some existing content. There seemed general agreement with Mr. Lucier's call for the two committees to inform and help each other, and with Mr. Dempsey's view that service development and architecture would have to involve more than technological considerations. Ms. Elkington said that the Research Libraries Group (RLG), having worked on some of the relevant issues, could help the DODL develop.

Mr. Keller declared that the Steering Committee should give the working groups a "grand design," ask them to "make it so," get the right people to work on implementation, and review the groups' work along the way. Mr. Lucier observed that more working groups might be needed after the first ones.

Mr. Seaman proposed that he, as DLF director, contact each DLF member institution about possible contributions of OAI records in the first stage and determine how many distributed collections would be available. Mr. Greenstein stressed the desirability of early work on developing tools for searching across collections at the item level; to

develop services, he said, one must be able to find content. A discussion ensued about the degree to which current, rudimentary finding services could be built upon by the DODL.

The discussion then focused on whether the DODL could and should go beyond sharing existing content to build a coherent collection in support of scholarship. Some felt that, in place of connecting "scattershot collections," previous efforts at which had not produced much, it would be preferable to develop clearly sequenced collections, and also that starting the two working groups should precede canvassing institutions about available OAI records. Proponents of that view felt that the DODL needed focus as a collaborative digital library for the humanities or for some discrete part of them, and that the working groups would need to know what the content focus was to be. Other participants, however, thought that a preliminary "environmental scan" would be desirable for determining "what is out there" of use for DODL purposes, that making better use of existing content would be one part of the larger goal of expanding digital content access, that a scan might identify what is available from which to develop subsets of thematically coherent content in the humanities, but that eventually DLF institutions would want to share content also in other fields.

Participants in the discussion suggested that the DLF organize the working groups and asked them for ideas while the search was under way for a DODL project leader, who would not make the governing decisions but would coordinate activity, including communications. Initial, practical steps could include identifying a broad set of services, designing a basic search tool, describing specifications for records to be shared, developing some part of a systems interface, and working on all this with OCLC and RLG. The work could include developing an interoperable, searchable union catalog or something that users would regard as a new level of service.

Ms. Marcum declared that the Steering Committee's role should be to decide whether the DLF is going to create a DODL and to determine strategies for getting there, but should leave less strategic issues to the working groups; what is needed is a framework within which institutions can act. Others added that users are glad even for rudimentary access, that years of talk already have gone into collaborative digital library development, and that the Steering Committee should not try to specify what will come from the proposed working groups.

The discussion then turned to financing the DODL and its development. Mr. Keller identified three possible sources: individual institutional budgets, the DLF's pooled capital fund, and money specially raised by the DLF for the DODL. Observing that institutional contributions need to be in expertise, time, and technology, he volunteered to work with Director Seaman on approaching funding sources, and he also asked endorsement of the use of some DLF capital funds for at least part of the DODL's financing. Observations were made that a focus on content, such as the humanities, or on technology, would suggest which funding agencies to approach, such as the National Endowment for the Humanities or the National Science Foundation.

Ms. Lougee then identified another needed component of the plan—outreach. Suggestions were made that outreach include coordinating with other groups and publicizing activities to get wide recognition of the DODL's development.

Mr. Seaman, among others, called attention to the interest that funding agencies might have in whether the DODL's proposed finding system would serve more than the humanities. After Ms. Mandel's observation that the Steering Committee still seemed divided about the need for a coherent content theme in the DODL's development, Mr. Keller presented the following "picture of the challenges":

- There are lots of digital objects of different kinds.
- There are several ways of assigning meaning to digital objects: data, metadata, semantic understandings.
- There are a number of needed tools, such as search engines and pattern recognition devices.
- There are themes of knowledge, such as the humanities.

He contended that one could not define a finding system on just one or two of these levels. Digital library applications need to be glued together within a comprehensive design for future possibilities.

Mr. Lucier suggested that the group endorse going ahead with DODL development as set forth in the initiative committee's report, informed by concerns expressed at this meeting. Mr. Keller enumerated items on which he believed there was consensus:

1. The DLF should draw up a description for a DODL leadership position

2. Inquiries should be made about potential volunteers for the two working groups

3. Fundraising should be pursued quickly

4. Part of the support for the DODL should come from the DLF capital fund

5. As reportable events take place, the DLF should reach out to colleagues and the world

Mr. Keller added that the DLF Executive Committee and the DODL Initiative Committee would serve as advisers on these steps. Mr. Greenstein asked to add to the list of tasks that identification be made of groups that are building thematic collections that might be collection focal points for the DODL.

The Steering Committee endorsed the proposed points by a show of hands, with none raised against. The meeting was then adjourned for lunch.

AFTERNOON SESSION

Membership Expansion Issues

Upon reconvening, the Steering Committee took up the question of whether to add new DLF partners and allies, from abroad as well as from within the United States. The question involved functional issues for the Steering Committee, Mr. Keller said, whose size already (32 members and 4 allies) made it hard to work in the manner they had when they were half that size.

Referring to a report[1] circulated before the meeting, Mr Seaman identified the following institutions that had made unsolicited expressions of interest in joining the DLF: the University of North Texas, Oregon State University, and the International University, Bremen. He reported that the National Institute for Technology and Liberal Education wished to work with the DLF but did not require membership in it. Also, he said the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) in the United Kingdom was extremely interested in becoming a DLF ally. He had discussed possible partnership with several libraries abroad as well, the following of which were very interested: the Bibliotheque Nationale de France, the British Library, and Oxford University. None of these, he said, seemed overwhelmed by the work expectations of DLF membership or the cost of joining, and none desired a special category of membership for non-U.S. institutions; only the logistical difficulty of being truly active across a long distance seemed to concern them (this was particularly true of the interest expressed in conversation with the Australian National Library).

Mr. Keller proposed that Mr. Seaman go ahead with plans to explore membership by the Bibliotheque Nationale de France, the British Library, and Oxford University, and also to contact the National Library of Canada, the National Diet Library in Japan, Cambridge University, and the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in the Netherlands, and that the Steering Committee agree to admit DLF partners from outside North America on equal terms with partners here. In the ensuing discussion, participants said that expanding would make the DLF a different kind of organization, but noted that not all that the DLF does takes place around the Steering Committee table, and certain institutions abroad, some of whom already come to DLF forums, would bring benefits to the partnership.

Mr. Keller then proposed that the Steering Committee endorse in principle its readiness to admit international members, and that a governance group be established to report at the next meeting on issues created by size. Mr. Tabb proposed that international members be invited by the next meeting, and Ms. Cline noted that admitting international members would require changes in DLF self-descriptions that currently contain the term "national."

By show of hands, the Steering Committee agreed to accept international members, with no hands raised against.

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[1] "Action Item: New Partners and Allies?"

Mr. Keller then proposed that the Steering Committee create a governance working group with authority to engage an outside consultant to determine how the Steering Committee should operate in the future. In the ensuing discussion, participants cautioned against losing the DLF's ability to move quickly and against losing the Steering Committee's role as a working group, differing from many other library associations. Mr. Keller said that if the motion to study governance were approved, all members of the Steering Committee would be asked to advise on three to five persons to appoint to a governance committee.

By show of hands, a motion to create a consultant-supported governance committee was approved, with no hands raised against.

Consensus emerged that action on the applications from Oregon State, North Texas, and Bremen be postponed until the governance committee could make its recommendations, and that the DLF's current description of the membership-application process include notice that applications are temporarily not being accepted. Mr. Greenstein suggested that a new look be taken at what kinds of institutions and qualifications would be desirable for members in the future. Concerning JISC's interest in joining as an ally, Mr. Seaman was asked to consult further with the head of the JISC committee that deals with digital library matters, then bring back a case statement identifying what JISC might bring to the DLF and why it should be considered for admission as an ally rather than as a member.

NDIIPP Briefing

The Steering Committee then welcomed Laura Campbell and Clay Shirky from the Library of Congress, who gave a briefing on the progress of the National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program (NDIIPP), financed by the U.S. Congress.

Ms. Campbell said that, out of an overall authorization of $100 million, the sum of $5 million had been appropriated for a strategic plan, which five Congressional committees have now approved. For implementation of the plan, the sum of $20 million is now available for obligation, and another $15 million if matched, for implementation work over the next four to five years. At the same time, the Library of Congress, under a consonant strategic plan of its own, is developing 12 internal projects related to the NDIIPP. The first NDIIPP solicitation has been issued for implementation proposals from potential partners, and arrangements have been made with the National Endowment for the Humanities for peer review of proposals. Near-term plans include collecting content, working on business models, inventorying standards and best practices, testing preservation architecture, and moving to prototype development.

Mr. Shirky described the development of NDIIPP architecture, now in an 0.2 version, which will be a technical rider on partnership agreements. He presented a diagram, "a boxology," showing three major functions—content ingestion, metadata management, and life cycle management—in relation to provisions for pointing to -- and providing views of material in -- high and low degrees of demand. Those working on the project,

Mr. Shirky said, no longer believe that metadata can be fully shared using a single standard for all institutions everywhere because institutions cannot all be forced to prepare metadata in the same way, so the project is concentrating on ways to enable library systems to "converse" using minimal requirements for transfer metadata. The project also has to consider how entire archives can be exported for preservation from entities that go out of business. In a federated world, he continued, interfaces are needed for access, storage, import, and export, and "stress testing" is necessary to track losses that may occur in content transmissions.

Mr. Dempsey concurred with the desirability of interoperability testing, and Mr. Seaman announced that Ms. Campbell and Mr. Shirky would be reporting further about NDIIPP at the next DLF Forum, in Albuquerque on November 17 through 19.

The Outsell Subscription

Drawing on a previously circulated paper[1] Mr. Seaman explained a recommendation that the DLF drop its half-subscription (shared with the Council on Library and Information Resources) to publications of Outsell, Inc, a commercial research firm in the information industry, and instead apply the $10,000 fee to DLF projects, particularly the DODL initiative. Mr. Seaman had discovered that some of the material provided under the subscription could not be shared with directors of DLF member institutions. By voice vote, with no nays voiced, the Steering Committee approved ending the subscription.

DLF Finances and Budget

Mr. Seaman then summarized a proposed budget for 2003-2204[2], detail of which had been circulated earlier. The budget projected $651,000 in operating income from annual partnership payments ($620,000) plus interest on operating funds ($31,000). As explained in a financial report for 2002-2003,[3] although operating revenue for the previous fiscal year had exceeded operating expenses by $88,798 that still left an accumulated operating surplus from previous years of $154,152, which would be carried over. Other available assets included $644,995 in a capital fund that would reach $775,000 when all members had paid up (some pay in annual increments). All funds are in short-term investments.

In response to a question, Mr. Seaman explained that some non-members of the DLF have been allowed to attend DLF Forums without paying registration fees because they are working with the DLF on projects, which Mr. Runkle observed was a good policy. In response to a question about the absence of money in the budget for adding staff for the DODL project, Mr. Seaman explained that capital funds would be used to do that.

By voice vote, with no objection voiced, the Steering Committee approved the proposed budget.

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[1] "Action Item: The CLIR/DLF Subscription to Outsell, Inc."
[2] "Proposed Budget, 2003-2004." The DLF's fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30.
[3] "Annual Report 2002-2003: Finances."

DLF Activities and Initiatives

Summarizing two previously circulated papers,[1] Mr. Seaman described the DLF's initiatives, publications, contracts, and grants and his activities as director. In addition to visiting DLF member institutions during the past fiscal year, Mr. Seaman also sat in with DLF working groups, which he said operate well within the DLF umbrella. A Digital Masters Registry being developed as an OCLC/DLF initiative is nearly ready to go, he said, and the METS community is really coming together as a group of implementers. Another major task in the previous fiscal year was publishing the study of user behavior commissioned from the Outsell firm. He expressed a willingness in the coming year to continue to make additional site visits when an outside reaction might be beneficial to institution's projects.

Mr. Keller recommended publicizing the Digital Masters Registry when ready, and while encouraging Mr. Seaman to stay in close touch with member institutions, charged them with responsibility for contacting the DLF's director when needed. Noting that Jerry George is retiring as a regular member of the DLF and CLIR staffs, Mr. Keller thanked him for his communications services, and encouraged DLF members to call with ideas about future staffing for the DLF. CLIR and DLF are still discussing whether to continue to share a communications position, as it has done successfully with Jerry George, and if so, what to change in the job description.

Mr. Seaman reminded members that the spring 2004 DLF forum would be in New Orleans, the first to be held where there is no DLF member institution, and that the fall 2004 forum would be in Baltimore, where The Johns Hopkins University will assist. Specific dates will be sent by e-mail. Last year's New York forum was the most expensive so far, Mr. Seaman said, but also the best attended; therefore that site will eventually be used again. The DLF forum fellowships, extended to librarians new to the profession, are proving popular, he said.

Noting from Mr. Seaman's report that the DLF was advancing an "enormously impressive array" of activities, Mr. Greenstein expressed hope that enthusiasm for the DODL would not diminish recognition of the value of much else that the DLF is doing. Mr. Seaman said that many DLF activities will be useful in developing the DODL, but it will not be all that the DLF does.

Mr. Lorcan encouraged the development of service architecture instead of just technical architecture, recommended encapsulation of much of the DLF's activity into a "service or marketing architecture" that illustrates the DLF's shared understandings as Mr. Shirky had illustrated the elements of the NDIIPP project, and volunteered to help devise such a "boxology," which would encapsulate a set of ideas rather than being a blueprint for something to be built. Ms. Mandel recommended using consultants in this kind of activity, and Mr. Keller declared that such a "marketechture" would be forthcoming.

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[1] "Annual Report 2002-2003, Initiatives, Publications, Contracts, and Grants, and the Activities of the Executive Director," and "Forthcoming, 2003-2004."

Mr. Keller thanked the DODL initiative committee for its work, noting that the members, besides himself and Ms. Lougee, were Mr. Greenstein, Ms. Kaufman, Ms. Mandel, Mr. Seaman, and Mr. Tabb. He would consult with Steering Committee members, he said, about the composition of DODL working groups approved at this meeting, and would work with the Executive Committee and the DODL initiative committee on working-group appointments. Steering Committee members joined in thanking Mr. Lucier, who is retiring, for his service on the Executive Committee, and Mr. Keller asked Steering Committee members to send recommendations for a successor.

There being no further business, the Steering Committee was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Gerald George, recorder
30 October 2003