



ASSOCIATION OF RESEARCH LIBRARIES®

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ARL Endorses Digitization as an Acceptable Preservation Reformatting Option

The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) has endorsed digitization as an accepted preservation reformatting option for a range of materials. It encourages its members and others already engaged in digital reformatting and those interested in initiating these activities to make organizational and economic commitments to adhere to accepted standards and best practices in digital reformatting and to establish institutional policies to maintain digital products for the long term. At the same time, ARL recognizes that the choice to use digitization, or any reformatting option, for preservation is not prescriptive—it remains a local decision. Many approaches are possible and digital reformatting should now be considered a valid choice among the various methods for preserving paper-based materials.

This endorsement comes from the work of the ARL Preservation Committee, which concluded that the emerging consensus around best practices for the creation and long-term maintenance of digital files, coupled with the overwhelming advantages of digitization for access, argue for support by the library community of digitization as a viable preservation reformatting strategy. William A. Gosling, University Librarian at the University of Michigan and Chair of the ARL Preservation Committee, said, "Students, and more and more faculty, expect libraries to provide information in electronic formats. It is now time to move forward, time to recognize and adopt digitization as an acceptable preservation option for reformatting brittle and hard-to-access materials. ARL is prepared to serve as a catalyst for this movement." ARL looks forward to the support and leadership of the preservation community and allied organizations in this endeavor.

As a first step in building community support and facilitating the development and implementation of policies, standards, guidelines, and best practices where they do not currently exist, ARL has released ["Recognizing Digitization as a Preservation Reformatting Method" \(PDF\)](#). The paper, prepared by staff at the University of Chicago and the University of Michigan, benefited from the comments of a number of additional preservation staff and funding agencies staff as well as from many ARL directors.

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