



2015 through 2017



INTRODUCTION

*Following a successful planning phase and launch in April 2013, the **Digital Public Library of America** is well on its way toward achieving its ambitious goal of bringing together the riches of America's libraries, archives, museums, and cultural heritage sites, and making them freely available to students, teachers, researchers, and the general public.*

At its first anniversary in April 2014, DPLA contained over 7 million digitized cultural heritage items from 1,200 contributing institutions across the United States—up significantly from 2.4 million items and 500 institutions at launch. DPLA has received widespread recognition and even acclaim in its first year from professional organizations (the American Association of School Librarians' Best Websites for Teaching & Learning) as well as popular media (TIME's 50 Best Websites of 2013). DPLA's large and growing community—now including an array of service hubs and content hubs, 200 energetic community reps drawn from all 50 states, four advisory committees, and an active board of directors, in addition to the DPLA staff—should be proud of this auspicious start.

Nevertheless, there is much left to do to fulfill DPLA's tremendous promise. This strategic plan lays out our organization's goals for the next three years. It focuses on critical elements that must be completed in this timeframe for DPLA to succeed—**top priorities**—as well as areas that we must pay careful attention to, and in some cases prepare the groundwork for—**supplemental priorities**.

We must, first and foremost, **complete our hub network** so that all collections and item types in America have an on-ramp to DPLA; **fully build out our technology platform** to ensure we have a solid foundation for many years to come and that anticipates further growth and diversification; and **pursue an outreach plan** that gets DPLA resources more widely into the hands of the global public, into education at all levels from kindergarten through graduate schools (with a special focus on underresourced organizations), and onto the screens of eager amateur and family historians and the developers who are creating the latest apps and websites.



This strategic plan is ambitious in scope but achievable if DPLA can continue to flourish organizationally and as a community.



Our plan will require not just the energy and commitment of DPLA staffers, board and advisory committee members, and our network of librarians, archivists, museum professionals, and the public across the United States. It will require significant additional financial resources, not only from individual grants—which have been critical to reaching this point and likely will remain crucial for the next few years—but also from reliable ongoing funding streams. A final piece of the puzzle, therefore, is **achieving sustainability** through a diversification of revenue, including some regular sources, by the end of FY2017.



VALUES

*Our plan emphasizes throughout the **core values of DPLA:** maximal openness to our shared*

cultural heritage, a strong public spirit, an emphasis on collective action and collaboration across many institutions and individuals, and the free, democratic access to knowledge that public libraries are known for.

*These values are suffused through the **three elements of DPLA:***

1.

*A **portal** for discovery, featuring millions of items from collections from across the country, and containing materials from around the world;*

2.

*A **platform** that serves those materials not only through our own website but through innovative and creative apps and other sites;*

3.

*A **public option** for reading and research in the twenty-first century that continues a tradition of democratic access to knowledge in the United States.*

This strategic plan outlines how we can maintain and expand those elements and values over the next three years.

OVERVIEW

The Digital Public Library of America currently has two main units, one focusing on content and one focusing on technology. It also has additional substantial activities in outreach and dissemination, and an incipient interest in education. While these activities are not currently organized into formal units, that could happen within the timeframe of this plan, especially if our activities around areas like education increase. (See sustainability and staffing section at the end of the plan.)

It has been a key principle of our organization that the entire DPLA works together toward our general goals, rather than in distinct, unrelated units, and most of our activities by necessity require the collaborative work of technology, content, and outreach. So although this plan is broken down into parts related to teams within DPLA, it should be underlined that impacts are made across our work, and deliverables for one unit almost invariably involve the input and activity of other units. Parts of the plan below, therefore, although categorized as deliverables for a particular unit, require matching work by others within DPLA.

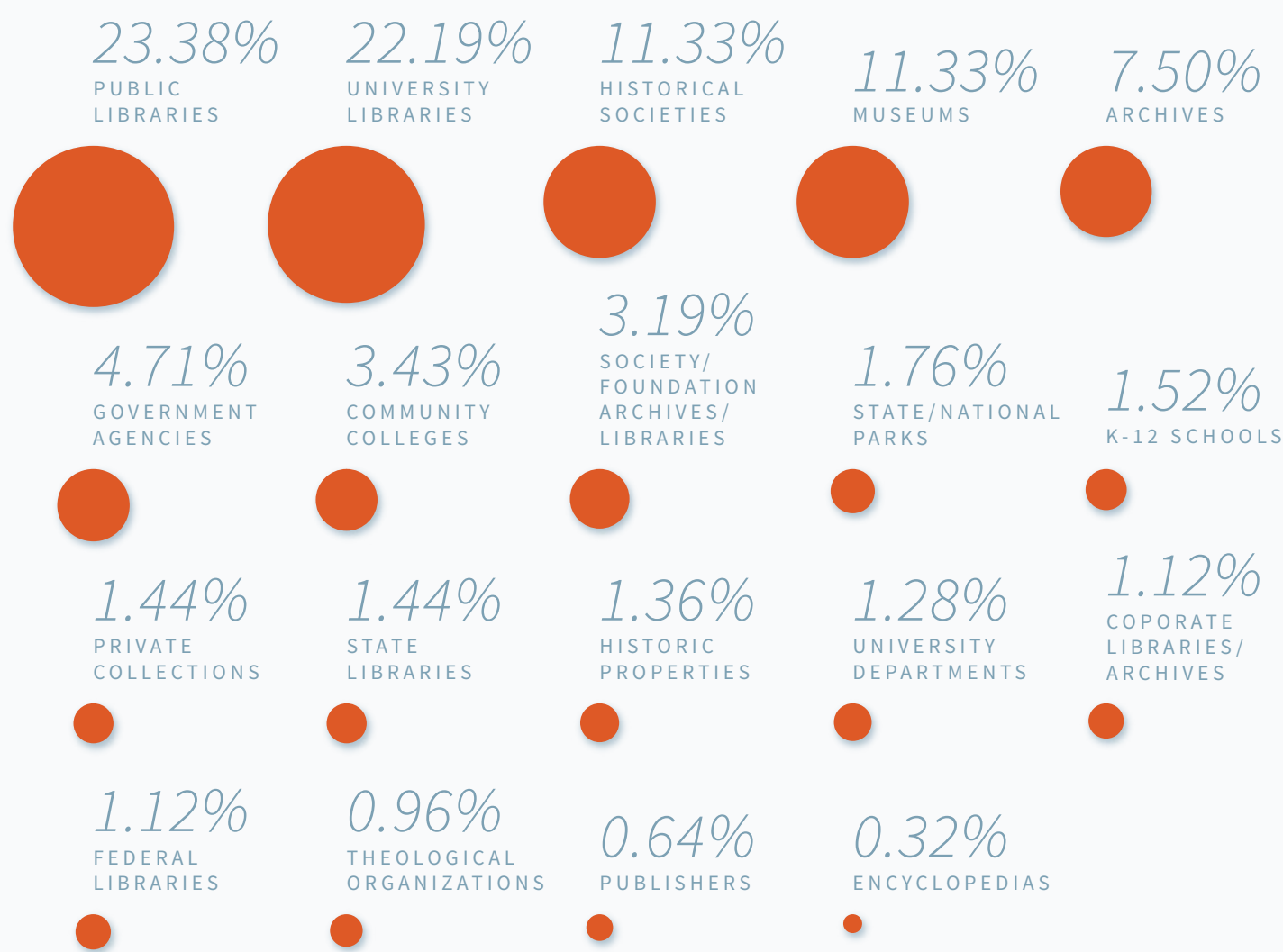
CONTENT

Top Priorities: *Complete the service hub network across the United States so that every collection that wishes to be a part of DPLA can become so. Diversify our holdings so that all kinds of institutions, item types, geographical regions, and topics are adequately represented.*

Supplemental Priorities: *Continue to add content hubs as our capacity permits. Pursue special initiatives for item types that do not currently fit into our framework, such as ebooks, audiovisual material, and research. Enhance metadata through an improved metadata schema, linked data, and better, more streamlined rights statements.*

Incredible progress has been made in the first year to grow DPLA's collection. From 2.4 million items at launch from 500 donating institutions, we now have surpassed 7 million items from well over a thousand institutions. These institutions range from some of the smallest historical societies and rural public libraries to some of the largest museums, archives, and research libraries in the United States. There is significant diversity in these institutions beyond size as well, including local, state, and federal governmental bodies, private collections and libraries, corporate and organizational archives, and community colleges. DPLA contains materials in a remarkable 400 languages, a testament to the collection's breadth within the U.S. (including many indigenous languages), as well as the fact that America contains people and objects from around the world.

TYPES OF PARTNERS (SPECIFIC)



Breakdown of contributing institutions, April 2014

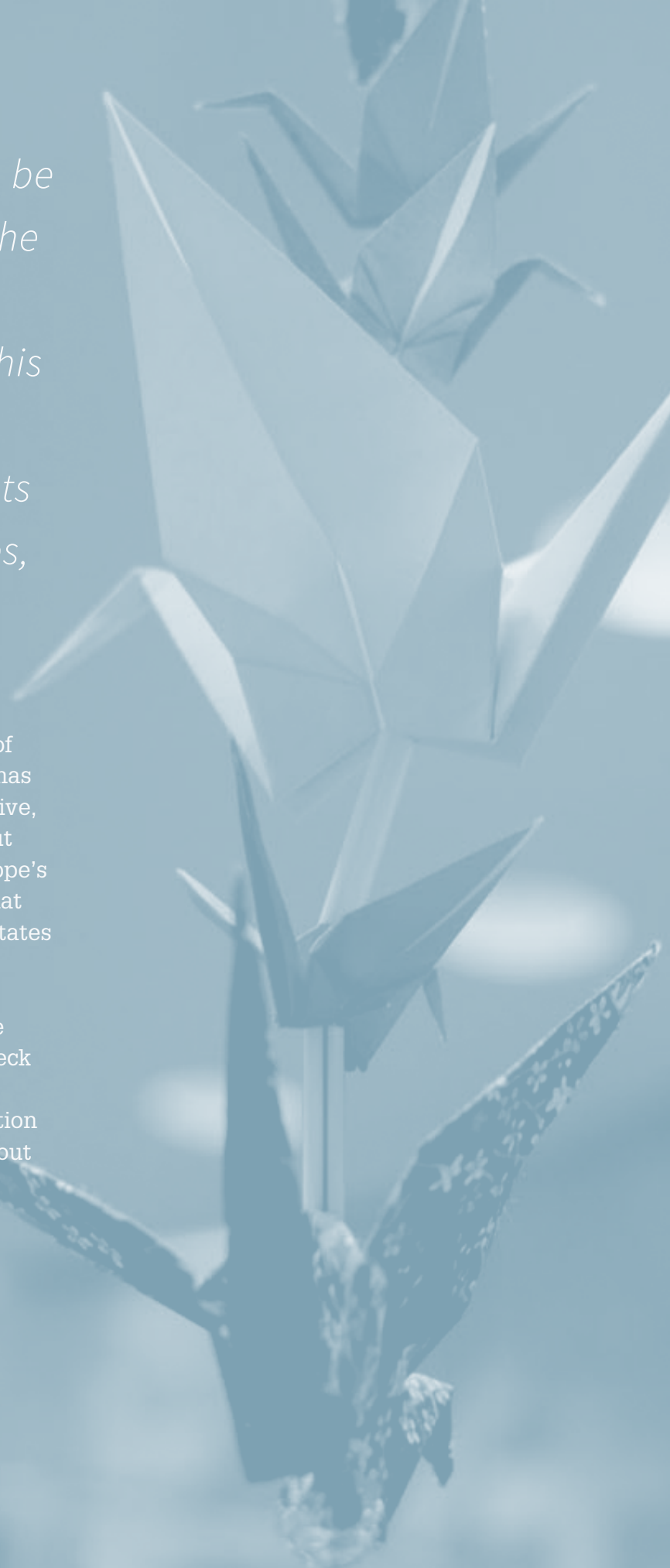
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Nevertheless, much more can be done to diversify and enrich the collection. Although satisfied with our first-year progress, this is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the available contents of America's libraries, archives, and museums.

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A good comparison can be found in the work of Europeana, which launched in 2008 and now has over 30 million items. Even with their impressive, vast work, this collection represents only about 10% of the estimated 300 million items in Europe's cultural heritage institutions. We anticipate that the potential universe of items in the United States is of a similar scale.

Over the next three years we need to continue to expand at a rapid pace, but a major bottleneck is the lack of universal coverage of the United States through our hubs network. If an institution who would like to join DPLA is in a state without a service hub, and it has fewer than 200,000 digitized items, we currently have no way to onboard it as a standalone hub (i.e., a content hub), since those hubs require a peer-to-peer relationship that is taxing to DPLA staff.



HUBS

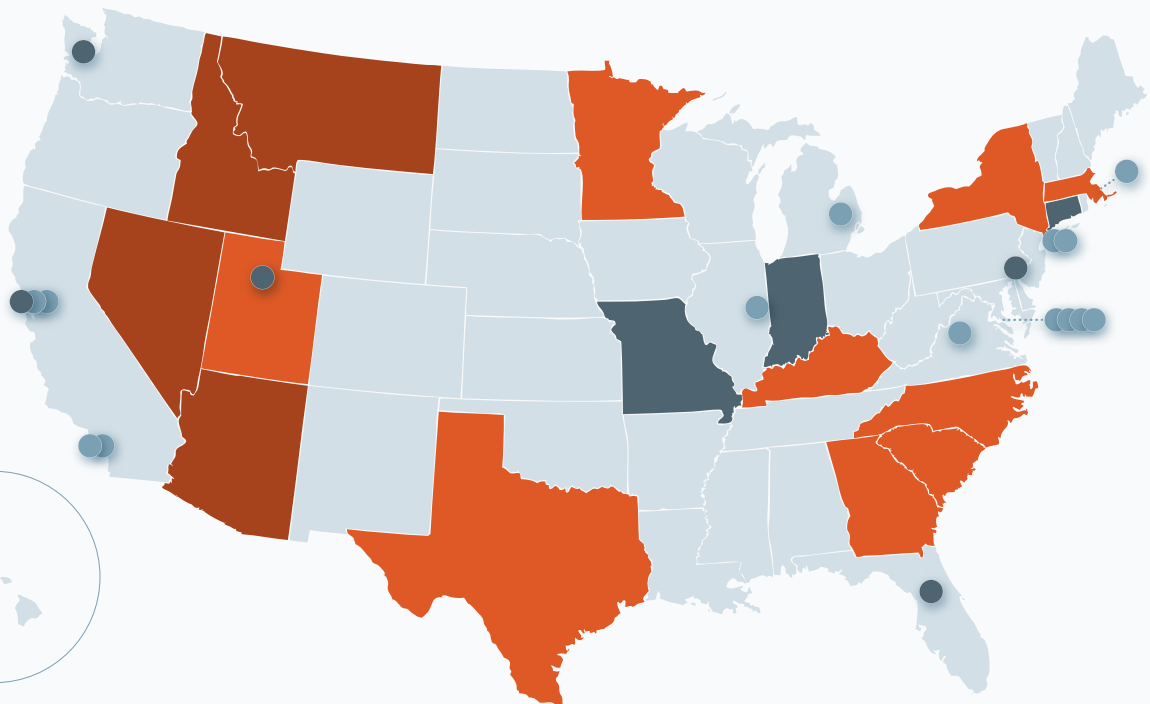
In the next three years, our top priority is to complete our national network of service hubs, so that we can draw materials from every state in the union. Currently we have 11 state or regional hubs, which cover 15 states. To cover the

map, we must launch new hubs in the remaining states, or have states join forces with an existing hub. This will require a concerted effort by the DPLA staff, community, and funders, but it is very much within our reach.



DPLA HUBS LOCATIONS

- SERVICE HUBS
- SERVICE HUBS: PARTNER STATES
- CONTENT HUBS
- HUBS IN ACTIVE DEVELOPMENT



Content and service hubs, August 2014

In terms of content hubs, on our first anniversary we lowered the threshold for admittance from 250,000 openly available digitized items to 200,000, permitting some potential hubs that had been standing on the sidelines to join. But we remain resource-constrained at DPLA headquarters to allow us to drop this threshold much further; these one-to-one relationships, although tremendously productive in that they bring in millions of items from large hubs, are extremely time-consuming for staff compared to the networked service hubs, with their single point of access. We will continue to have to weigh this balance between direct and indirect contributions, aiming to bring down the content hubs threshold in a measured way during the term of this plan as we add staffers to handle the relationships. But it is unlikely to drop below 150,000 items without creating unrealistic expectations about what even an expanded DPLA staff would be able to handle.

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A related and equally important issue is that it is precisely these larger institutions that are most likely to have the capacity—staffing, infrastructure, established practice—to act as service hubs.

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If they participate as content hubs, it may reduce the probability that a service hub will be established in their state. Relatedly, we

will also continue to explore and experiment with alternative models for hubs. One hub, the Mountain West Digital Library, currently acts as a kind of regional superhub; it may be that other hubs can move into similar roles in their areas of the country. In short, we will need to be flexible and creative as we build out the network.



DPLA aspires to contain the full range of human expression, from books and manuscripts, to photographs and artwork, to audiovisual and multimedia content.

We are proud to contain both paintings from America's premiere museums and postcards from family vacations; rare volumes from large universities and baseball cards from a century ago; manuscripts by famous writers and diaries from those who are less well known. Currently we have dozens of categories such as these in the collection, and we will continue, as we note below, to add categories of items that are underrepresented.

At the same time that we pursue this expansive mission, as with all library collections it is important for our organization to draw some parameters around the collection. We have emphasized, and will continue to emphasize, quality over quantity (especially for quantity's sake)—although we aim to have both—and will work to bring together unique, vetted materials that maintain our reputation for a high level of browsability, while also working at scale. Ideally, we wish to add collections and item types that complement our collection, enhance its value to the public, and increase the serendipity that comes from cross-institutional and cross-item-type discovery, and avoid those that do not.

Our hubs network surfaces such unique materials extremely well, since the hubs

pull from across the American landscape, and from institutions that have already made an effort to select and preserve items of interest and importance from their communities. Hubs and their contributing institutions act as both aggregators and as a layer of review that we wish to maintain to ensure the worth of the overall collection. Most of the collections they donate to DPLA are also of a size and nature that accretes well with what we already have.

Other collections will likely remain better hosted and accessed elsewhere on the web, because they would swamp DPLA and actually be detrimental to our highly regarded ease-of-use. For example, we do not plan to ingest archived web pages, which are already so ably and impressively stored by the Internet Archive, or openly licensed photographs from Flickr, both of which are so extensive as to overwhelm what we currently have, and which would make it much less likely that visitors could find materials from smaller institutions.

Other very large-scale content—item types with tens or hundreds of millions of instances, such as scanned newspaper pages or individual datasets from America's laboratories—may fit our mission better, but will require a careful approach. For these cases, we may have to do a cost-benefit analysis on the additional infrastructure needed (as in the case of newspapers, because full-text indexing would be necessary, beyond metadata hosting), and look carefully at existing host sites to see if we can complement what they are doing.

We may also try to develop additional filtering points, very much in line with the hubs model, that can provide a more limited, but still extremely extensive and helpful, set of items. For instance, rather than ingesting all photographs of flora taken by a network of Pacific Northwest botanists, we may ask one scientific institution acting as a lead for this network to provide a curated set consisting of a few representative photographs per species. Some item types very well may require separate sections of our website, although we do

not want to balkanize the site to such an extent as to make content undiscoverable or to reduce serendipity.

Beyond these caveats about scale, fit, and filter, however, we do wish to reach out to fill in perceived gaps with targeted efforts and partnerships and to grow the overall collection substantially. We will seek to make sure that the existing collection is more heterogeneous in terms of chronological, geographical, and topical measures, item types, and types of organizations represented. In some cases, rights issues stand in the way of easy engagement (e.g., books); in others, such as moving images, the cost of hosting presents near-term problems.



RESEARCH, ASSESSMENT, AND DIVERSIFICATION OF THE COLLECTION

During the first year of this plan we will expand our research and assessment agenda, both to understand better where we are, and what the universe of potential additions to our collection might be. Our Assistant Director for Content currently does quarterly internal assessments of our collection's composition, which has proven extremely helpful and will continue. To that cycle we will add a more robust research

initiative to grasp what the total universe of partners and contributors looks like, and the scale of certain items types. This will give us better overall measures of progress.

Filling in the gaps in item types and kinds of contributing institutions may require creative approaches. For instance, in our first year we were only able to ingest 20,000 moving images and 8,000 sound files, representing a mere 0.4% of the entire collection. Audiovisual materials are harder to digitize and to host, and they are often subject to more complex rights than texts or static images like photographs. Similarly, relatively recent books are generally encumbered by a complex licensing system that has flummoxed libraries nationwide, and so unsurprisingly we have far fewer of these books than we would like compared to older, public domain books. Other kinds of materials, like the prodigious outputs of America's research community, reside in repositories that are unlikely to be passed to us through state- or regional-based service hubs.



For these special cases beyond our standard model of cultural heritage materials, we will have to explore new methods for bringing them on board.



For audiovisual material, for instance, a “metahub,” or hub that works across the entire country, rather than in just one region, for the purpose of hosting complex content like audiovisual material, may be necessary. The content team will explore such a partnership in the first year of this plan.

For contemporary ebooks, DPLA staffers have paid careful attention to the shifts in the book market and how DPLA might be able to play a role in bringing more ebooks to the general public. Here, there is less of a clear path than with cultural heritage materials because of the many players and vectors involved, from publishers and distributors to libraries and reading devices. Ebook licensing and brokering also requires considerable staff, legal and business agreements, and a technical platform tailored for e-reading, including full-item hosting, user authentication, and digital rights management, all of which we have eschewed in our open-access work. Several states have already moved toward a statewide model of ebook purchasing, potentially nullifying the role DPLA could play as a nonprofit intermediary.

Nevertheless, we understand as an organization how important ebooks are to the idea of DPLA as a true public library, one that contains both historical and contemporary materials. It therefore seems wise to continue to gather information about a potential ebook project in the first year of this plan, keep careful track of pilots in states like Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Colorado, and remain poised for action if we can find a helpful role in the second and third years of the plan. We will focus on answering some key questions: 1) Can we put in place the technical and staffing capacity to run a national ebook platform, and what resources will we need if we do it? 2) Will public libraries use DPLA as an intermediary for ebook purchases and platform procurement, and what will acting like a vendor mean organizationally in addition to our other work? 3) Will publishers accept a large-scale relationship with DPLA?

Even without solving these questions, we can, in the near term, leverage our existing ability to pull disparate resources together to aggregate and highlight the increasing number of openly

available contemporary ebooks. We can begin this program in the same way we have pursued the aggregation of cultural heritage items, by developing a network model and by reaching out to institutions that are already exposing open ebooks to begin a large-scale collaboration. Many independent presses and university presses, for instance, as well as some larger presses experimenting with new business models, have begun to put ebooks on the open web. In addition, groups like the Authors Alliance, other nonprofits such as Knowledge Unlatched, and companies such as Unglue.it provide other avenues to collecting and presenting recent ebooks—through author donations, consortial funding of Creative Commons licensed works, and crowdfunded books, respectively. DPLA could very effectively act as a front end for all of these presses and projects.

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Meanwhile, as our in-depth investigation of the overall ebook landscape continues, we can act as a useful clearinghouse of information about interesting projects and pilots, and perhaps engage in our own pilot if the right opportunity presents itself.

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AMERICA'S RESEARCH OUTPUT

Research materials more clearly fall into our current abilities and framework, since there is a national open access mandate and many existing products of scholarship, including articles and datasets, reside already in institutional repositories but are vastly underutilized. Here it is easy to envision that DPLA can step in to surface, aggregate, and make more discoverable a wide range of topical research content.

DPLA will pursue this role, as it does with so many other initiatives, through major collaborations. Clearly relationships with colleges and universities will be central to this effort; we have already started exploring a collaboration, for instance, with the SHARE Project (SHared Access Research Ecosystem), led by the Association of Research Libraries, the Association of American Universities, and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. In addition, we may be able to expand our efforts to pull unique content from institutional repositories within our existing hubs model.

METADATA

One of our major priorities is to improve the quality of data we receive from libraries, archives, and museums. After all, it is from this data that so much else flows, including our ability to search well across collections and develop popular interfaces such as our browseable map. We plan to work extensively with our partners to get better data into this core piece of DPLA, and to refine that data as part of our valuable ingestion processing.

In this three-year window we expect to make some major advances in the metadata for our materials. The content team is already working on the next version of our metadata application

profile (MAP version 4), which will enhance our ability to better index, sort, and connect items from our collection. Furthermore, it will strengthen our ability to pursue the promise—as yet unfulfilled—of linked open data within DPLA. Our JSON-LD data package includes the ability for many kinds of linked data to be slotted in, but so far we have done little in the way of authorities, vocabularies, and other globally shared identifiers. More emphasis on leveraging the power of linked data will be a supplemental priority addressed in the latter part of the period covered by this plan.

RIGHTS

Another key part of data quality is the rights statements assigned to items. We plan to make a special effort to streamline, in concert with our international partners, our rights statements. As of this plan, DPLA has over 26,000 different rights statements assigned to items; beyond being unwieldy, this makes it extremely difficult for the public to discern which materials can be freely reused for a homework assignment, shared on a blog or in social media, or combined with other materials for non-commercial or commercial purposes. We will work to reduce the number of statements to a manageable number (approximately 15-20), mapped to internationally recognized standards that will be hosted on a neutral namespace. Fortunately, in June 2014 we received a \$300,000 grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to help us with this important initiative.

Top Priorities: Future-proof DPLA's technical infrastructure, moving it from a launch-appropriate deployment to a more rigorous, flexible, and extensible architecture. With U.S. and international partners, ensure a sustainable, innovative, and powerful code base for ingest, storage, and metadata enhancement. Develop a generalized metadata aggregation system, for use by our service hubs and others. Ensure that we can index all kinds of content, potentially including full text as well as metadata. Streamline the ingest process so that we can maximize our overall collection and the regularity with which we poll partners for new content.

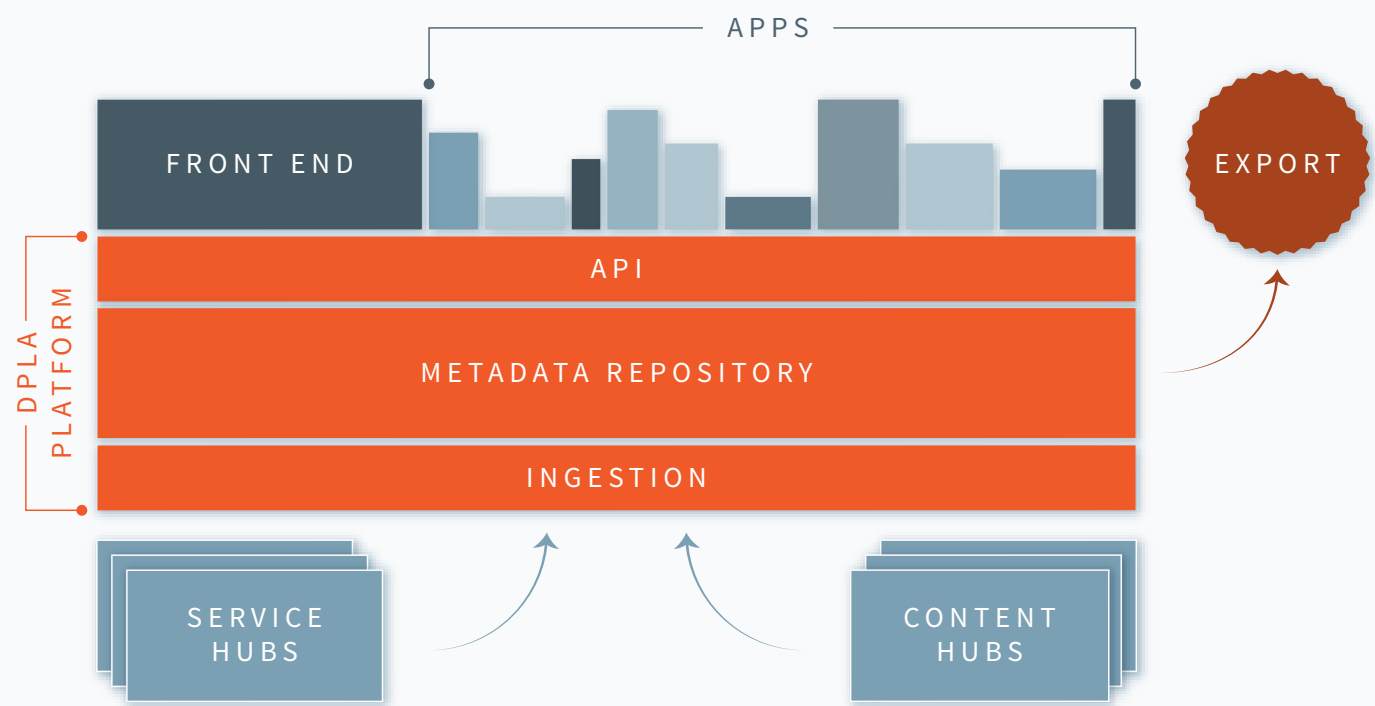
Supplemental Priorities: As needed with the content division, launch secondary areas of the site to help with specific item types, such as ebooks, research materials, and time-based media. Prepare for the possible hosting of some kinds of digitized content in addition to metadata. Work with the metadata specialists in the content division on the automation and addition of linked open data and other metadata enhancements.

The Digital Public Library of America's technology has been lauded as much as its content. At launch we already had over two million items in the data store, and it has scaled extremely well in the first year, tripling in size with relatively few changes and experiencing little downtime. Our infrastructure uses modern web and cloud technologies, and has the advantage of not being based on traditional library or museum vendor systems that tend to be text-heavy on the front end and unnecessarily complex on the back end to handle unneeded features like circulation.

Numerous reviewers, students, researchers, and enthusiasts have found the user interface to be exceptionally welcoming, providing different

pathways into the large collection, from maps to timelines to exhibits, in addition to more standard search tools. This is a testament to the success of the planning phase of the DPLA from 2010-13 and a keen focus on usability that we plan to maintain. Indeed, this usability has become a hallmark of DPLA, and something that we need to consider with any new content additions described above.

In addition to the specific initiatives outlined below, the technology group will also invest time and effort into a more rigorous research and feedback loop, so that we can acquire more-than-anecdotal information about what is working and what needs further improvement.



A basic schematic of DPLA's technical infrastructure



MODERNIZING THE INFRASTRUCTURE

Nevertheless, DPLA's infrastructure was set up first and foremost to be ready for our launch in April 2013, understandably with less concern for how the site might evolve over time and with some novel elements, like content ingest scripts, that were not yet as optimized as they could be from real-world use. In addition, at the time of the launch DPLA had no in-house technical staff; we now have three developers and a Director of Technology, and have shifted in the first year from a reliance on outside consultants to a team that will carry DPLA's technology forward over the next few years—and well beyond.

The DPLA tech team's focus has naturally turned to further expansion and optimization, and ease of maintenance over time. Over the next three years, we will be planning and undertaking significant improvements to ensure that our technology stack supports our changing needs effectively. Specifically, our technology roadmap will address five key areas: usability and accessibility of our web presence; improving the cost and efficiency of our infrastructure; partnering on infrastructure development; contributing to open source software projects; and expanding and better serving the communities that use DPLA's platform application programming interface (API).

STREAMLINING THE INFRASTRUCTURE

DPLA's technology infrastructure has served us well over the last year, but as we grow and seek to expand our reach, we have begun to reevaluate what we have in place. One particular area of concern for us are the costs associated with hosting our infrastructure. This infrastructure includes over 40 virtual servers hosted on Rackspace across both our production and staging environments, a setup that is robust but not necessarily efficient.

Accordingly, we plan to deploy a more streamlined infrastructure, on a cloud hosting provider with optimal price-to-performance, over the first year of this strategic plan.

COMMUNITY-FOCUSED OPEN SOURCE DEVELOPMENT

As DPLA has grown, we have discovered that we face common technical issues with other institutions and initiatives both within and outside the United States, and also that the technical infrastructure we launched with was oriented (quite sensibly) toward a successful launch rather than a sustainable and interoperable setup. To that end, over the next three years, we will be working on sharing and exchanging technology with both national and international partners, including both DPLA service hubs and other national and international cultural heritage aggregators. As part of this, we will work to make the components of our infrastructure more modular and shareable. We are particularly interested in establishing common approaches and infrastructures for metadata mapping enrichment and deduplication. We have established regular contact with our counterparts at Europeana, Trove (Australia), and DigitalNZ (New Zealand), and have begun discussions about reusable technical elements with them as well as with our American hubs.

In addition, as we seek to expand and improve functionality and capacity, we will investigate the possibility of implementing and contributing to additional open standards and free and open source software systems. While we are still in the process of identifying which projects would best complement our current anticipated needs, actively contributing to free software communities will allow DPLA to continue to give back to the open intellectual landscape that serves as a crucial part of our mission. It also builds on our previous contributions to the open source community, such as the ingestion, platform, and portal codebases that we share on GitHub.

Such advances will also, crucially, set us up for further technical services in the future—

an even richer package for service hubs and others with similar needs. Based both on the experience of DPLA as well as its hubs, we have seen the need for a broadly reusable set of tools for aggregating and enhancing metadata. As such, we plan in the next few years to develop an “metadata aggregation system in a box,” which will repurpose portions of DPLA’s ingestion infrastructure as a shared solution for use by hubs. We are also interested in the potential of a best-of-breed, open source solution for managing digital collections that would natively create metadata compliant with the DPLA Metadata Application Profile and integrate with our metadata ingestion infrastructure. The groundwork, and possibly development, of this platform, is likely to occur during the period of this plan.

THE API

We also have seen steadily growing use of the DPLA API over the last year. Over a thousand keys to the API have been distributed, up more than threefold in the first year. It is critical to grow this method of using our collection over the next three years, by encouraging the development of more apps that use our API through hackathons, conference presentations, and other targeted outreach opportunities directed towards developer communities. (See Outreach Section, below.)

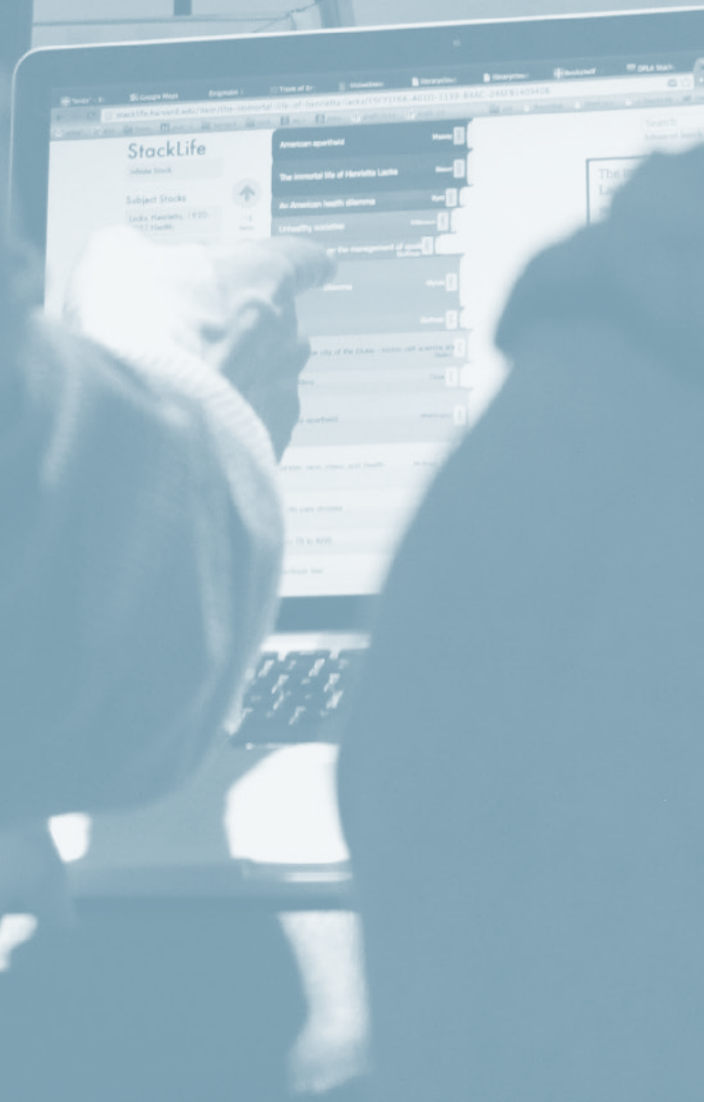
We will be seeking further feedback from the developer community about how to improve our API and technical documentation, and whether we can provide better analytics for API consumers. Indeed, we have begun to receive feedback in these areas, and anticipate making these changes as we work towards implementing new versions of our API, including at least one major iteration in the term of this

strategic plan. As we work to develop a new version of our API, we will improve our ability to gather metrics on how the API is used, to improve reporting internally as well as to hubs, partners, and developers who use the DPLA Platform.

THE COLLECTION AND THE FRONT END

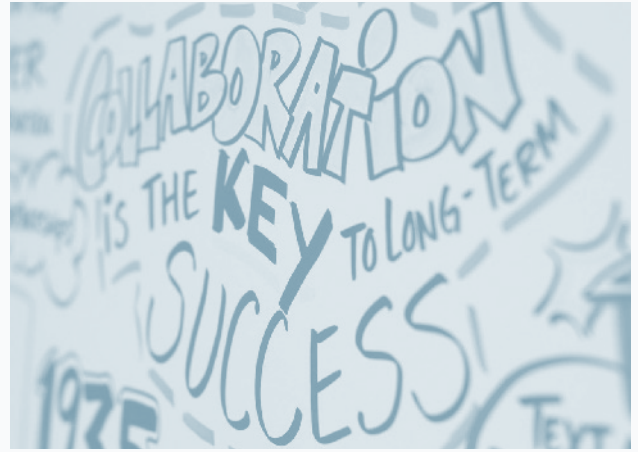
On the front end, our portal and exhibitions serve as the primary point of interaction with our users. To ensure that we can continuously improve the user experience of our web presence, we will engage in more rigorous and widespread usability testing, and ensure that our site remains accessible to all. As we move forward on building new interfaces, we will similarly undertake user testing to ensure that their functionality is clear and easy to understand. We also need to create a better foundation for our exhibitions so that they can be brought together more easily from our collection, and rotated on a more regular basis.

Finally, in concert with the content team, the technical team will be studying what DPLA might have to do with respect to currently underrepresented item types. We will have to assess how we might provide better access to subsets of content. For instance, the ingest of newspapers may require us to host not only the metadata for each issue but also the full text (or its index) to maintain our high level of searchability and serendipitous discovery. And as noted at length in the content section, special structures may have to be put in place for ebooks, scholarly research, and audiovisual materials.



Top Priorities: Increase use of the DPLA portal and platform through broad dissemination as well as targeted outreach to audiences and communities who can benefit most from the collection. Find ways to have DPLA used extensively in the classroom, from K-12 through higher education.

Supplemental Priorities: Increase activities around events and themes of national and local significance; keep our community reps program vital; focus more on better discovery of our resources through search engines, social media, and traditional media; turn DPLAfest into regular and productive event.



In our first year, DPLA received considerable attention and the use of its portal and platform was substantial. We had over a million users on the site, as well as nine million hits to the API. Although these are large numbers, considering the scope and ambition of DPLA they merely represent a good start.

To achieve a broad awareness of DPLA globally, and the innovative and helpful array of use that follows, we need to act on multiple fronts in the next three years. Of continued importance to the communication of DPLA's value will be our strong and growing community, and the in-person activities that this community develops. DPLA is not a staff-only project; it is a large-scale American and even international collaboration, and maintaining multiple ways for people and organizations to get involved with, and to speak about, DPLA is essential. We will also need to expand our digital means for reaching the general public, through search engines and social media, while at the same time remembering that more traditional media, including mass media, must play a role in our marketing. Last, but certainly not least, we will make a special, expansive effort to reach educators and students.



Community Reps

We have been delighted with the immediate success of our community reps program, which allows people from all walks of life to evangelize for DPLA in their regions. In two rounds of admissions in 2014, we accepted 200 reps, who now hail from all fifty states and five countries. These reps have held public events in libraries, museums, technology companies, and schools, and have created wonderful and extremely helpful introductory materials to DPLA, its content, and its technology.

The community reps program thus acts as a force multiplier, especially helpful since the small DPLA staff cannot travel to every state or give the number of talks or host events at the scale necessary for a project of this size. We therefore plan to keep the Reps program vital in the coming years, refreshing admission as needed to maintain diversity and geographical coverage. Reps also provide DPLA with a built-in focus group, and we take their feedback seriously. As dedicated and heavy users of our resources, they can help us with the new features, content, and functionality this plan outlines.



DPLAfest

DPLAfest, which took place over two days in Boston in October 2013, and which drew over 700 registrants, clearly showed the potential of an event that focuses on our work and the similar work of others. We wish to repeat that success, and will do so beginning in April 2015. The fest is intended to be an ongoing way for actively involved members of the DPLA community, including librarians, archivists, curators, and other cultural heritage professionals, as well as the general public, educators, students, and enthusiasts of all stripes to participate in the project, exchange knowledge and ideas, and to have some fun as well.

The fest will move around the country starting in 2015, giving each region a chance to host and highlight local materials and projects. This plan will require DPLA to find host institutions in new cities and to do significant advanced planning, which we have already begun. Ideally, host cities will display the collaboration DPLA is known for, with equal participation from museums, libraries, historical societies, and other cultural heritage institutions.

STAFF TALKS AND PRESENTATIONS

Other live events have played a large role in our outreach in the first year, with DPLA staff making dozens of appearances across the country. While it is important to continue these in-person activities, given high travel costs we will have to prioritize and diversify our conference and event targeting. For instance, while maintaining our strong professional relationships with libraries, archives, and museums, for FY2015 and beyond we will make a special effort to give talks at educational conferences, family history gatherings, and other proceedings in domains that we have not yet focused our outreach on.

TRAINING AND HACKATHONS

DPLA and our community also increasingly act as a storehouse of innovative ideas about digital libraries and museums, with experience about running complex collaborative entities such as service hubs. We can leverage this experience and knowledge to provide training opportunities for librarians, archivists, museum professionals, technologists, software developers, and anyone else working in, or with an interest in, these areas. As new aspects of our project emerge, such as our detailed work in rights, we will be able to run seminars (online and off) in those areas as well.

We already have a good model for this in our Public Library Partnerships Project, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This program has already had numerous workshops for public librarians in four states, and is developing digital training curriculum that can be used even more widely. Similarly, DPLA staff and community reps have run successful hackathons, in which creative software is developed to use DPLA's data and collection. We have recently released documentation for how to run these hackathons, and expect many

such events over the next few years, which will broadly stimulate the use of our API.

SEARCH AND MEDIA OUTREACH

Digital means for reaching more people will also have to play a role in our outreach plan. Currently we receive half of our traffic from search engines, a not-uncommon proportion for cultural and educational websites. But as a relatively new site with few backlinks from other sites to our content, and thus little of the interconnectedness that helps sites rank highly in search engines, these search engine referral numbers are nowhere near as high as at older, more established sites. We have taken the necessary steps to ensure that our full collection has been indexed by search engines, but we need to make other changes to optimize the site so that DPLA items show up more in queries.

Social media has been an effective outreach tool, with DPLA quickly reaching over 16,000 followers on Twitter, over 10,000 on Facebook, and over 6,000 on Tumblr. Tweets and Posts of the Day, with featured items, have been popular; some have gone viral and resulted in spikes to our traffic. A post on World War II on the popular image sharing site Imgur led to over a quarter-million views, and a "Summer of Archives" series in collaboration that site was a major success. Via social media, press such as The Atlantic and Slate have also picked up on and rebroadcast our materials. We will continue these efforts, but it is clear that to do it well we must hire a full-time outreach/social media manager.

Other aspects of our outreach will also need to become more systematic. Relationships with the press have occurred in opportunistic (and often successful) ways, but a coordinated press strategy, including regular outreach and shared contact lists, will be particularly helpful,

especially around events and milestones that are coverage-worthy. We should also aim—without spamming or cold-calling—to build long-term relationships with those who in turn can disseminate information to many others—for instance, state and county social studies coordinators. We will pay special attention to public librarians, instructors and students at colleges and universities, teachers at middle schools and high schools, genealogy and family history groups, public history enthusiasts at the state and local level, and technology organizations and conferences. For instance, DPLA can send packages containing brochures, lessons plans, and pointers to our exhibits, as well as swag (such as bookmarks) to public schools and libraries; send detailed information about DPLA's API and its possibilities to computer science departments, tech groups, and developer conferences; and work with Wikipedians and other reference writers to ensure more connections to our reliable content.

EDUCATION

DPLA needs to do more to adapt and highlight its value to educational users—a huge potential audience. Our recent grant from the Mrs. Giles Whiting Foundation, which will involve significant research and focus groups with educators, represents an important start to our efforts on this front. During the next three years, we will make a concerted effort to understand the needs of educators, and to see what structures, if any, need to be put on top of our primary resources so that students and teachers can discover and use them more effectively.

We have already begun to look at how DPLA materials are ending up on syllabi and cataloging interesting uses by instructors. We must also investigate state-based Standards of Learning and national Common Core categorizations, and whether those rubrics

are a useful addition to our site. Ideally, we should create a teacher's portal containing all of our educational initiatives, run by dedicated educational staff. (See staffing, below.) As already noted, more outreach to well-connected people and organizations who can do further dissemination will be a central part of this effort.

We will work in a concerted fashion to add additional scaffolding for educational users and others who need help finding specific materials in our large and growing collection. Through improved search tools, including supersets of search terms, we will be able to avoid the uneasy feeling many students can have of large digital collections: that of a sea of undifferentiated materials. Dedicated topics pages could also show how DPLA covers numerous subjects. And of course preset lesson plans are often helpful for teachers, who often have little time to put together a class.

The most popular part of our site is already a curated one: our exhibitions, which tackle central themes in American history and culture, from civil rights to national parks to sports. Currently we only have a handful of these exhibitions, and thus have considerable room to grow and expand that crucial section. This expansion could happen as part of our overall education strategy, be tied to LIS courses in digital curation (which is already happening), or have multiple sources of origin and execution. We should work to identify a range of additional priorities for exhibitions, including a range of subjects (history, science and technology, literature, culture, etc.), and look carefully at which exhibits are popular, who is using them, and how people are finding them, so we can hone the strategy as we develop the collection.



ASSESSMENT OF OUTREACH METHODS

Measurements of success from all of these outreach methods is complicated. It is tempting to rely on numerical measures, such as those on Google Analytics (which we use), but most marketing has an indirect rather than direct effect. To be sure, we want to see significantly increased site traffic (page views) over the next three years. We also can track mention of DPLA in local press, on blogs and social media, on library and teacher discussion boards and listservs, and attempt to correlate these with specific outreach phases and methods. Furthermore, our email campaigns can be assessed by number of opens, shares, and the geographic spread or concentration of opened emails. Our listserv software can provide these, and other, measures of successful outreach.

But easily measured stats such as these only tell part of the story. We wish to have impacts that will not necessarily show up in our server logs. Some of the best outcomes will involve stories of family research, creative school assignments, and novel artistic reuses of the collection that we will never be able to track through technical means. Here, we very well might be able to use our growing network of Community Reps to report back about impacts, such as in schools or groups of enthusiasts. Perhaps the best signs of success will come from examples of use and reuse that will be the most gratifying—not necessary large-scale social-media-related hits, but cases where other groups pick up our openly available metadata and content to improve the lives of those who do not normally have access to the riches held in DPLA. We will be sure to catalog those cases in greater detail in the coming years.

Top Priorities:

Achieve sustainability by the end of FY2017 through a mix of revenue sources, potentially including public and private funding, cost-recovery services that are related to our core operations, and consortial or membership support; grow the staff at a pace commensurate with new funding and new initiatives, while keeping the organization lean.

DPLA Inc. has been generously funded by grants from its inception. Led by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation's \$1,200,000 grant, the non-profit that emerged from the three-year planning phase has received \$2,500,000 in supplemental funding in FY14, including \$600,000 from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to pursue a sustainability plan, \$1,000,000 from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for our Public Library Partnerships Program, \$450,000 from an anonymous donor who found DPLA's mission for democratic access compelling, \$80,000 from the Mrs. Giles Whiting Foundation to begin educational planning, and \$300,000 from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to streamline our rights statements. The organization has also been able to carry forward parts of earlier million-dollar grants from the Knight Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities, for building out the hubs network.

Given the public spirit and major national and global impact of our mission, we hope for—and indeed will require—substantial continued grant funding in the period of this strategic plan, as we remain in an early and vulnerable phase. But during these three years we must also strengthen our financial foundation by beginning to diversify our funding and revenue sources. Our goal must be to move toward a long-term mix where grants support new initiatives; foundation, corporate, and personal philanthropy underwrites some core services; activities of value become, in cases where merited, cost-recovery components; and membership or sponsorship models help with large-scale community or consortial work. We have already begun gathering data about these possible revenue sources, keeping an eye

on the sensitivities of our critical partners, and our new business development director will lead these efforts in the coming years.

One major question mark remains the involvement of the federal government. DPLA has received generous grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the National Endowment for the Humanities, but we are currently the only major national digital library that is not wholly, or substantially, funded by government bodies. We have explored additional funding from the federal government, including agencies beyond NEH and IMLS, but as of the writing of this plan it is not clear if government involvement can expand to play a larger role in our sustainability.

ORGANIZATIONAL SIZE AND GROWTH

A key piece of our sustainability is how lightweight the organization is and will remain. At the time of this strategic plan, we will have expanded to 11 full-time staffers, including an Executive Director; a Director and Assistant Director for Content, and a Data Services Coordinator; a Director of Technology, two Technology Specialists and a Metadata and Platform Architect; a Business Development Director; a Project Manager; and a Project Coordinator. We are outsourcing much of our back-office operations, including bookkeeping and accounting. Starting in FY15, we will add a half-time fiscal manager to handle more substantial financial planning, budgeting, and grant operations. This is an extremely lean organization given the scale of what we are trying to accomplish—indeed, perhaps too lean given that it has led to some early capacity constraints, such as the ability to take on new partners.

Projecting forward, it is clear that we need to expand capacity in both the tech and content units, adding roughly 3-4 FTE to each in the

period of this plan, depending on supplemental funding. For the content group, these FTE will go into further metadata management and enhancement, as well as QA. For the tech group, these FTE will go toward in-house development of our infrastructure, API, web applications, and UI/UX. During this period, it is also essential, as noted above to add a full-time Outreach Coordinator. Given our turn toward usage, particularly in education, we anticipate the need for a Director of Education, and an additional staffer in that new unit, to engage instructors at all levels.



For FY14 we had a run rate of approximately \$1.5 million, and with additional personnel, we will edge up to to \$2 million for FY15. Considering the scale of what we have accomplished and what is to come, we believe we are an extremely cost-effective organization. At the end of this three-year phase, we anticipate a yearly run rate of \$3-3.5 million.



CONCLUSION

*Following a successful launch and tremendous initial growth, the **Digital Public Library of America** has a bright future if it can continue to garner ample resources and leverage the incredible energy and commitment of its community. This plan represents only the start of what will undoubtedly be a decades-long project to make more accessible the rich holdings of collections in the United States.*

Seth Denbo of the American Historical Association, writing about the Digital Public Library of America, cited James Madison's letter to the Kentucky politician W. T. Barry: "Popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is but a prologue to Farce or Tragedy or perhaps both." The democratic access that DPLA provides in assembling a tremendous free and open resource for the general public, both in the U.S. and abroad, and its role as connective tissue for America's libraries, archives, and museums, has just begun. We urge all readers of this plan to join us in a revolutionary venture.

¹ Seth Denbo, "The Digital Public Library of America and the NEH, a Partnership for the People," Perspectives, September 2014, available at <http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/september-2014/the-digital-public-library-for-america-and-the-neh-a-partnership-for-the-people>