Designing and Implementing a Digitization Workflow for Post-custodial Initiatives at the Benson Latin American Collection, UT Austin

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Post-custodial archival model

Providing access to archival materials without taking physical custody

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	·	DIGITAL INITIATIVES]		
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Emphasizes sustained collaborative and mutual relationships, rather than one-off extractive ones

Archives provide expertise, equipment, and funds as needed to make materials available digitally

Partner organizations undertake digitization work and retain physical and intellectual control

Previous post-custodial projects at the Benson:

- Archivo Histórico de la Policia Nacional, Guatemala (AHPN)
- Latin American Digital Initiatives (LADI)
- Human Rights Documentation Initiative (HRDI)







Libros de Hijuelas

Records of land privatization (*reparto de tierras*) in Michoacán, Mexico, mostly late 19th-early 20th c.

192 books of bound documents, approximately 75 thousand pages, in various states of decay

Held at the Archivo General e Historico del Poder Ejecutivo del Estado de Michoacán (AGHPEM) in Morelia, Michoacán

AGHPEM

Wikimedia Commons

Project overview

4 local historians will digitize and describe each document over the course of 2 years, funded by a British Library Endangered Archives Programme (EAP) grant

Digitization workflow emphasizes speed and simplicity: minimize cleanup & manual file name entry, simplify file management

Equipment must be inexpensive, easy to deliver, and last the full 2 years

Digitization workflow

Cameras are mounted vertically on copy stands and tethered to the computer and controlled from within Adobe Lightroom

Custom templates used in Lightroom to automatically name files

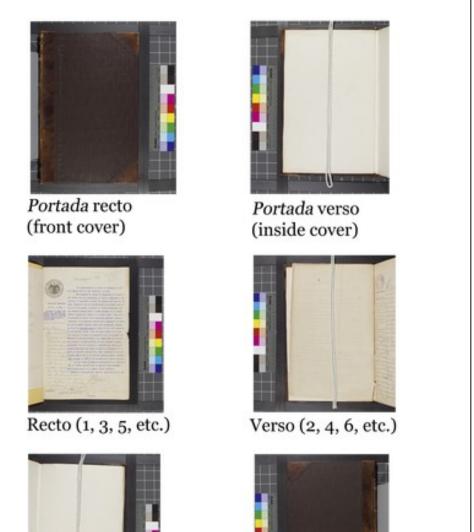
Books are photographed in 6 sections: front cover, body, and back cover, each photographed in recto and verso

Batch editing (crop, color adjustment) and export into a single folder of TIFFs

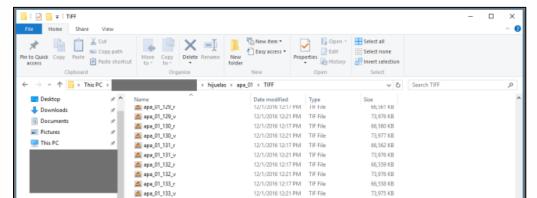
Equipment and software used

Canon EOS 6D DSLR camera

Beseler copy stand, LED lights, Kodak color separation guide Adobe Lightroom to capture, review, edit, and export photos LaCie rugged external HDDs to deliver digitized materials Total Commander to create and verify md5 checksums







Workflow can digitize up to 200 pages per hour



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Results to date

November 2016 workshop in Morelia was successful: Team has digitized 45 books in 6 months

Very little QC needed: team reviews images as they are taken and re-photographs as needed

Minor modifications to the workflow communicated to the team over email and during May 2017 follow-up visit



Lessons for future projects

Equipment needs: Taller copy stand for larger items, highermegapixel camera for finer detail

Raw image files are ideal archival masters

Clearer idea of object size and condition needed prior to arrival

Nimbleness is essential: Quick responses to emailed questions and requests for assistance, remote adaptations to workflow

Internet access on-site to facilitate communication