The Digital Assembly line:
Running an effective and efficient digital lab

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What does a high volume digital lab need?

- Digitization equipment
- Sufficient long term budget
- Project planning
- Student workers
What is the Texas Tech University Libraries Digital Lab like?
We have two Kirtas APT 2400 book scanners.
Equipment

One large format scanner
Equipment

One product table
Learning in 2006

- High learning curve
- Low workload
- Standards within the lab
- Establish workflows
Learning in 2006

- Document workflows
- Verify we were processing items correctly
- Quality over quantity
- Dealing with errors and mistakes
Efficiency in 2008

- High project workload
- High volume output
- Quantity over quality
- Using human resources more effectively
- Procuring equipment to meet digital lab efficiency needs
So what has changed?

A shift in priorities means a shift in approach…
Work Philosophy

Then…
- Craft
- Rigorous quality control
- Focus on specialty
- 1-2 students per project
- If a student was absent, the project didn’t get worked on

Now…
- Assembly line
- Quality control not as rigorous
- “Jack of all trades” approach with training
- All students can work on any project
- Work is completed faster
Then…

- Few highly skilled students working
- Dedicated to one project
- 3-7 students
- The lab open only 9 hours a day from 8 am to 5 pm
- 1-2 people working at a time.

Now…

- More students working more hours
- Able to work on any project
- 24-36 students
- The lab open 14 hours a day from 8 am to 10 pm
- 5-8 people working at a time.
Student Assets needed

Then…
- Technical writing
- Photography
- Computer maintenance
- Digital image editing

Now…
- Ability to focus on one task for long periods of time
- Detailed orientated instead of skills orientated
- Consistency in product produced not perfection
Then…

- First project in, was the first project out
- Equal effort on all projects

Now…

- Effort dictated by the project’s priority
- Higher priority projects get done first, more time/effort
- Lower priority items get worked on, but at a slower rate
Then…

- Spreadsheet
- Little feedback to project owners about progress

Now…

- Database
- Monthly feedback for project owners on status of projects and expected end date based on current work
Then
- 14,000 Books to be digitized
- Completing 17-39 books
- Expected finished date 2045

Now…
- Completing 500-800 books
- Expected finish date 2011-2015
Theses & Dissertations Digitization Project

Theses and Dissertation Project Scanning Progress

Number of items scanned

Oct-07: 17
Nov-07: 39
Dec-07: 39
Jan-08: 2
Feb-08: 142
Mar-08: 873
Apr-08: 873

Month
So, what have we learned?

- It takes time to develop workflows
- Keep documentation up to date
- Quality control is a teaching tool
- You can never check 100% of the work, but you can train someone well enough that they rarely make mistakes.
Conclusion

- We had to change as the work changed
- We tried to look to the future
- Our lab grew in equipment, in the number of hours the lab is available, and in human resources
- As our lab grew, people thought of more projects to propose.