The following four chapters each highlight a specific avenue for collaboration and innovation: information literacy and instruction, the digital humanities and MOOCs, digital media, and the learning management system (LMS), respectively. These four chapters are well written, although the sixth chapter does include two case studies with their own references that make the structural organization of the chapter slightly confusing to the reader. Nonetheless, the case studies provided by Joe Eshleman and Kristen Eshleman in this chapter, about a long-term partnership on a digital humanities course over several iterations and the development of a MOOC at Davidson College, are well worth reading. Karen Mann’s two chapters, “Digital Media in the Modern University” and “Integrating the Library and the LMS,” both stand out for their presentation and practicality. Many of us may be hearing terms like “multimodal learning” and “digital literacy,” but Mann does an excellent job of concisely explaining what these ideas mean and how librarians can take action based on them. She also provides informative data on LMS usage in higher education and offers examples and ideas for how libraries can integrate themselves into their institution’s LMS.

This book is a valuable tool for academic librarians in any position that could potentially be open to collaboration, as well as librarians involved in information literacy instruction, librarians interested in or already working with instructional designers, and librarians in a leadership role looking for new ways of advocating for the library and further integrating the library into the student learning experience and the classroom, whether it be physical or digital. As the authors note, collaboration is not new to librarians, but this book should help move the conversation forward regarding the ways in which we collaborate on campus. —Kristen Cardoso, Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey


The title of Managing Digital Cultural Objects carries some risk of misleading the reader into thinking that it’s a how-to manual. It is not. This work is less an overview of the nuts and bolts of its subject (although it is that at times), and more an exploration of the theory and issues related to digital objects and collections: how we conceive of and create them, how we preserve them, how we share them, how users interact with them. As digital objects become critically important in libraries and collections of all kinds, this book serves as a welcome view across the landscape of digital collections, considering both current practice and future possibilities. It was originally published in the United Kingdom and was written primarily, though not exclusively, by expert authors based in the United Kingdom.

The book is divided into three sections, loosely organized around different ways of thinking about digital objects. Part 1 presents some of the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of digital collections; part 2 presents three case studies of cultural digital collections and a special issue related to each; part 3 focuses on Web 2.0 platforms, social media, and other spaces where the user might both access and create digital objects.

With chapter 1, Pauline Rafferty begins to sketch an outline of the themes and ideas of the book with a brief review of relevant background literature, before visiting some rather avant-garde approaches to organization, like emotional indexing and “storytelling as indexing,” that make for compelling alternative models. Chapter 2, by Sarah Higgins, discusses the use of data modeling as a foundational process for all subsequent choices made in the creation of a digital collection. The chapter assumes that the reader is already conversant with basic concepts in digital collections; but, for a moderately knowledgeable reader, it offers a ground-up approach to designing
a digital collection, with an eye toward maximizing the opportunities of the digital object itself and ensuring the potential for interoperability with other platforms (such as collection aggregators like the DPLA). In chapter 3, Katrin Weller discusses social media as a future historical resource in an accessible review of how platforms like Twitter and Wikipedia’s edit logs might one day inform the work of scholars.

The second section of the book presents case studies of digitization projects. In chapter 4, a group of CS scholars based at Aberystwyth University and the University of Glasgow describe a project that seeks to date the works of a single artist using computational analysis of original paintings. It assumes a level of mathematical and analytical sophistication on the part of the reader that may be overambitious for many, yet it stands out as a practical example of how digital objects can be used for original research in the arts and humanities. In chapter 5, Maureen Pennock and Michael Day of the British Library offer an insightful and useful account of the structures and systems used to support digital collections at the British Library, with an emphasis on the critical steps involved in digital preservation. This chapter is as close as the volume gets to a “how to” manual for digital collections, and it provides a sturdy foundation for thinking about managing digital collections in the broad sense, despite arriving in the middle of the book. Chapter 6 is not truly a “case study” in the traditional sense; instead, it offers a short albeit thorough review of issues in the preservation of digital audio. This chapter feels like one of the more immediately applicable chapters, providing a lot of useful information about both principles and methods.

The final section is ostensibly about social media and Web 2.0 platforms, including the ways in which the influence of users can create both issues and opportunities, and each chapter focuses on social platforms first and foremost. But they can also work as a discussion of object types—specifically images, music files, and videos—and the specific issues related to each. Chapter 7, by Corinne Jörgensen, provides an excellent overview of user-generated tags as an organizational tool and as a strategy for recall in digital collections, focusing on image tagging in Flickr and Facebook specifically. Chapter 8, by Nicola Orio, is a highly technical discussion of methods for identifying “affinities” (in this sense, duplicate or near-duplicate objects) within a collection of audio files; as with chapter 4, the reader will need to be conversant with computational analysis techniques to fully understand all the information presented, although an approximate understanding comes more easily. And, in chapter 9, Kathryn La Barre and Rosa Inês de Novais Cordeiro present an excellent overview of the issues involved in organizing and sharing digital video files, including the complexities of effectively representing film in metadata for discoverability. The chapter takes a broad view across a spectrum of digital environments from the catalogs of British Film Institute, to YouTube and Netflix.

The volume, taken as a whole, suffers a bit for being made of disparate parts: each chapter can feel as though it was written for a different audience—some for librarians and archivists, some for digital humanitarians, and some for computer and information scientists. Even so, each chapter does touch upon concepts and ideas presented in other chapters, which makes it worthwhile to read the entire work to get the fullest possible understanding of the subjects it covers. The book is made much richer by the expertise of its deeply knowledgeable authors, and even casual professional readers, provided they’re reasonably intrepid, will find a great deal of interest in its pages. And perhaps best of all are the extensive lists of “further reading,” in addition to references, which accompany some chapters. This volume aims to be a gateway into the work of digital collections; as such, it can prove valuable to students and experienced professionals alike. —Amy Frazier, Middlebury College