

What Digitization Wants: Emergent Audiences from Digital Collections

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As the digitization of special collections and archival material continues to increase, it is important to ask ourselves “what does digitization want?”. Research library digitization efforts, generally speaking, focus on the academic researcher as its end user. This is not surprising, as the ability for digitization to make available rare, fragile, and often inaccessible material to researchers around the world rests at the very core of why institutions digitize their collections. However, the growing availability of digital collections through a variety of access points has allowed discoverability far beyond traditional academia especially among a generation of users increasingly informed by the simplicity and seemingly unrestricted landscape of Google Images and the Internet at large. In this presentation I will provide an overview of the Getty Research Library’s many digital access points which include internal databases, institutional collaborations, externally hosted resources, as well as broad initiatives like open access. By allowing new audiences to emerge organically from the diffusion of digital content at these critical access points, a symbiotic relationship can be developed where librarians and archivists influence research outcomes through selection while the end users influence selection through creative new uses of content. As institutions continue to move forward with their digitization efforts, the question of how digital collections will live, how they will be discoverable, and the myriad ways audiences will use them in the 'real world' becomes critical to anticipate not only future research needs, but also how users will interact with digital content.

[Bio] Derek Quezada received his BA in Comparative Literature and Religious Studies from the University of California, Irvine with an emphasis in Critical Theory. At the University of California, Los Angeles, he received his MLIS with a concentration in Informatics. He started working at the Getty Research Institute as a project coordinator on a National Historical Publications Records Commission (NHPRC) funded digitization project of the Julius Shulman photographic archive. He continued to work on digital library projects until joining the Library Service department as a reference librarian in 2013.