



Digital Scriptorium

Annual Meeting

Remote via Zoom

12 October 2022

12:30 - 2:00 pm EDT

Director's Report

Throughout my first year as President and Executive Director of DS, I have been heartened by the support and dedication of the DS membership as the organization continues to move through significant changes in its technical platform. While these changes depart in many ways from the original vision of the DS founders to create a comprehensive and detailed descriptive catalog of manuscripts in US collections, they allow us instead to build a sustainable infrastructure for a national union catalog based on Linked Open Data principles and technologies. As the DS 2.0 Project Manager L. P. Coladangelo will report, we are within weeks of launching a publicly accessible beta version that will make official the beginning of a new era for Digital Scriptorium. Speaking on behalf of the current Board of Directors, we are grateful for the trust and faith that our membership has placed in our work as we have navigated through this process of change and advancement.

In addition to overseeing the redevelopment of the DS technical platform, one focus of my first year has been to build upon the work of my predecessor Debra Cashion to strengthen DS's organizational platform to ensure its long-term sustainability. With DS established as a tax-exempt, non-profit 501c3 entity and overseen by a Board of Directors governed by consortium by-laws, DS has been able to move away from strict dependence on a host institution for financial management and is now able—as many of you will have noticed—to invoice and collect dues from members to fund the management of its operations. As a result, for example, DS now manages its own website, which had previously and generously been maintained by University of California-Berkeley. Taking responsibility for these operations means that we can function with greater agility and flexibility; it also means that we can function more transparently and with greater accountability to our membership.

Indeed, increasing transparency and accountability has been part of a larger strategy to strengthen relationships with our member institutions and the people at those institutions whose work is affected by DS participation. We have worked to create new lines of communication that include regular updates from the Project Manager to membership and stakeholders about the progress of DS 2.0 and related news. Since December, Board member Sue Steuer, L. P. Coladangelo, and I have conducted member outreach meetings with staff at over 20 member institutions. These meetings have been an opportunity to speak directly with member representatives, library administration, catalogers, and technical services representatives to communicate directly about changes to DS, what will be required from members, and what members can expect in return. The meetings have been highly productive and a great opportunity for us to learn more about our member institutions and to make

connections beyond the curatorial level so that DS is understood as a “library project” as opposed to a “curators” project.

Our membership outreach has also extended to prospective members. We are pleased to be presenting two new members for approval at this meeting, the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library and the Smithsonian Libraries, and one returning member, the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin. We will begin a stronger push for new membership once DS 2.0 has launched but are heartened by the willingness of these institutions to join now at this critical time.

Having established the building blocks for organizational stability and growth, the Board of Directors will focus in the next twelve months on increasing membership to ensure the financial stability of DS for the long term. We will also need to review our fee structure for membership. In an effort to support institutions with fewer resources, we have already created a new category of membership called “Supporting Member,” which allows members to voluntarily pay a higher fee toward the support of DS. We are immensely grateful to institutions who have already agreed to be supporting members, including the Harry Ransom Center, the Beinecke Library (Yale University), Princeton University, Harvard University, and Columbia University.

We will also seek further funding opportunities to continue developing DS 2.0 and to build programming that supports the work of DS membership and scholarship related to premodern manuscripts in US collections. While our application this year to the IMLS National Leadership Grants for Libraries was not ultimately funded, the support reviewers showed for the project was highly encouraging, and we will continue seeking support from other programs. Thanks to “bridge” funding collected in 2020 from the Beinecke Library, Princeton University, University of California-Berkeley and Riverside, Harvard University, the Huntington Library, and Columbia University, we have been able to continue the Project Management position created by the previous IMLS Planning Grant. We anticipate being able to use dues to continue this position into the future beginning in FY2024.

In closing this report, I would like to thank my colleagues on the Board of Directors for their service over the past year: out-going Vice-President Janine Pollock (Free Library of Philadelphia), Secretary David Faulds (University of California, Berkeley), Treasurer Vanessa Wilkie (The Huntington Library), and Members-at-Large Tamar Evangelistia-Dougherty (formerly of Cornell University and now the Smithsonian Libraries), Susan Steuer (Western Michigan University), and outgoing member Ray Clemens (Beinecke Library). Without their support, the achievements of the last year would not have been possible.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynn Ransom
President and Executive Director, 2022-2025