



Digital Scriptorium

Digital Scriptorium
2025 Annual Meeting
Ohio State University
Columbus, OH
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2024-2025 Director's Report

In my capacity as the current Executive Director of Digital Scriptorium, I am pleased to share this report highlighting the extraordinary growth and achievements of Digital Scriptorium in the last year and laying out the strategic directions for the upcoming year. In all aspects, DS as an organization has continued to advance its mission to provide cross-institutional digital access to collections of pre-modern manuscripts in North America and enhance access and appreciation of these collections. As a result of the successful implementation of the new DS Catalog as well the guidance of the Board of Directors, the support of the DS membership and stakeholder community, and most of all, the remarkable talents of a small but mightily talented staff (L. P. Coladangelo and Rose McCandless), we have fulfilled each of goals for DS that we set out at the beginning of the redevelopment process back in 2019 at the Beinecke Library. In this report, I want to take this opportunity, then to remind ourselves what these goals are and what we have achieved this year in pursuing them:

- Building and maintaining an openly accessible, digital union catalog for global pre-modern manuscripts in North American collections based on linked open data (LOD) technologies and practices
- Supporting open access to works in the public domain
- Supporting and facilitating the digitization of member institutions' collections
- Creating a community of scholars, librarians, curators, and other citizen-scholars to share scholarship and expertise of collections, the academy, and cultural heritage communities
- Facilitating research that provides answers, provokes questions, and invites collaboration

Building and maintaining an openly accessible, digital union catalog for global pre-modern manuscripts in North American collections based on linked open data (LOD) technologies and practices

At the 2024 Annual Meeting, we announced the full implementation of the DS Catalog after three years of development. At the time, there were just over 12,000 records representing 35 institutions. A year later, we have more than doubled the number of records and now have data representing 45 member institutions, including nine new members brought on in the past year.

The DS Catalog now stands as a powerful discovery platform for North American manuscript collections. Indeed, it was described as an “increasingly indispensable portal” by Stella Panaytova in her justification for naming the platform as the [Bibliographical Society Council's Choice for January 2025](#). This phenomenal growth is the direct result of the efficient data transformation workflows developed by Project and Data Manager, L. P. Coladangelo.

2. Supporting open access to works in the public domain

In 2024, L. P. Coladangelo and Rose McCandless, Manuscript Data Curation Graduate Fellow, began a pilot program adding manuscript metadata from DS records to Wikidata. As of June 30, 2025, 2,922 items for DS-represented manuscripts have been created in Wikidata, and these now stand alongside other items for manuscript objects, allowing scholars to browse and search across international collections for other manuscript descriptions in Wikidata, including manuscripts from the Bodleian Library, Bibliothèque nationale de France, and the National Library of Wales, among others.

3. Supporting and facilitating the digitization of member institutions' collections

Thanks to donor support, DS was able to continue the Manuscript Data Curation Graduate Student Fellowship in FY24 and even luckier to be able to continue Rose McCandless in that position. The primary purpose of the fellowship is to provide member institutions support in creating and transforming member metadata for the DS Catalog. In the last year, Rose provided assistance for California State Library, Rochester Institute of Technology, University of Rochester, and Williams College, facilitating the addition of over 300 records to catalog.

Further, for the next year and thanks to the award of a grant in the amount of \$325,010 from the National Endowment for the Humanities' Department of Preservation and Access's Humanities Collections and Reference Resources program, awarded in May, DS will be able to continue this form of member support with a full-time Manuscript Data Curation Fellowship for two years. We have started reviewing candidates and are confident that we will have someone in place by the end of November. In addition to providing support for metadata creation, the MDCF along with L. P. Coladangelo will offer several workshops to teach staff at member institutions and anyone else who is interested about the DS data model, how to contribute better metadata to DS, and about inclusive cataloging practices for pre-modern manuscripts.

4. Creating a community of scholars, librarians, curators, and other citizen-scholars to share scholarship and expertise of collections, the academy, and cultural heritage communities

At the end of FY25, DS included 54 North American institutions as current members at different levels of membership, including 14 Associate Members who due to fewer resources and smaller collections are able to join for free. In the past year, we voted in nine new members: Bryn Mawr College, University of Dayton, University of Chicago, Lehigh University, Newberry Library, Rochester Institute of Technology, University of Rochester, University of Wisconsin-Madison,

and Williams College. Our membership truly reflects a broad range of institutions across the country now working together in partnership to advance premodern manuscript studies.

We are also seeing the world take notice. Our Google Analytics shows that the DS Catalog has had over 30,000 active users representing 130 different countries logging over 100,000 page views on the DS website in the last year. In addition to The Bibliographic Society's Curator's Choice recognition mentioned at the outset, we are starting to see examples of scholars out in the wild making new discoveries and sharing information back to member collections. A fragment from a 14th-century French book of rents in Western Michigan University collection, for example, caught the attention of manuscripts scholar and well-known blogger Jean-Luc Deuffic, working in France. Based on the names included in the fragment, Deuffic was able to provide WMU a more accurate place of production and possible date to update their records, and he did this in blogpost that was read by medievalists around the world. To track new research and discoveries, L. P. and Rose started a DS blogpost now available on the DS website, and we welcome new contributions anytime.

5. Facilitating research that provides answers, provokes questions, and invites collaboration

Further to building networks of research among our community, we are starting several initiatives to promote the work and value of the DS Catalog. I've already mentioned the public workshops that form part of the NEH-grant supported work above. L. P. and I will also be offering a course on Manuscript Description and Research in a Digital Environment at the Digital Medieval Studies Institute at the International Congress on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo, and at the same conference partnering with the Peripheral Manuscripts Project to offer three sessions on the movement of manuscripts to and in the US.

One final initiative that came out of the past year and that will have a significant impact on DS's ability to facilitate research of member collections is the establishment of the William G. Noel Eureka Fund that DS Board President Sue Steuer will discuss in more detail later this morning. The purpose of this fund, which has been established by Will's friends to honor his legacy, will support the needs of Digital Scriptorium's member institutions to make their manuscript holdings freely available for research and discovery.

To conclude this report, as I hope it has become clear, DS begins the next year from a strong and vibrant position. We would not be in this position without the extraordinary leadership of the DS Board of Directors, which is itself led by the extraordinary Sue Steuer (Western Michigan University) as President, Emily Runde (Columbia University) as Vice President, Regine Heberline (Princeton University) as Secretary, myself (UPenn as Treasurer, and Eve Wolynes (Kansas University), Anna Siebach-Larson (Rochester University), and Aaron Pratt (Harray Ransom Center, UT-Austin) as Directors at Large. We are also guided by the wisdom of the Strategic Advisory Committee, which is chaired by the indefatigable Lisa Fagin Davis (Medieval Academy of America), and includes Eric Johnson (OSU), Evyn Kropf (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Elizabeth Hebbard (Indiana University), Andrew Hicks (Cornell

University), Kivilcim Yavuz, University of Leeds, Megan Kelly, (Newberry Library)

The DS Board of Directors is also poised to elect one new member today: Ron Patkus, Head of Special Collections and College Historian at Vassar College. Each will, I am sure, bring valuable new insights and ideas into the governance and strategic development of DS.

The addition of a new board member unfortunately signals the departure of another: Aaron Pratt of the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin will be rotating off the board as of today. His service on the board has been instrumental in moving the organization forward, and I am grateful for his good work and continued support.

In closing, I wish to gratefully acknowledge the continued support of Penn Libraries, our partner institution, for providing the administrative and technical support to keep DS going and staff employed. I would also like to thank the Ohio State University Libraries, who joined DS last year, for hosting this year's Annual Meeting, and our good friend Eric Johnson, **Professor and Head of Thompson Special Collections at Ohio State, who has** graciously opened his physical and virtual spaces to the DS community for this event. We are deeply grateful to be and look forward to learning more about OSU's collections, as well as those of our new member Ohio University, and to hear from Rose McCandless about her work as the DS Manuscript Data Fellow.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Ransom
Acting Executive Director