Panama Canal Federal Documents

Date needed by & reason (class, exhibit, donor request)

The digitization of these documents is a high priority for the Libraries because of a partnership agreement with the Panama Canal Museum.

Source of funds (departmental endowments, donor, grant, etc.)

To be determined by the Dean

What is the initial project idea?

This project was initiated by Dean Russell during meetings with the Board of Directors of the Panama Canal Society. They recently agreed to a partnership and the digitization of the Federal documents relating to the Panama Canal was part of the agreement.

The Documents Department houses approximately 1,500 items published by the Federal Government that relate to the planning for, building of and ongoing operation of the Panama Canal as well as publications about its inhabitants and the flora and fauna of the area. These documents make up an important and valuable resource for researchers focusing on the Panama Canal. Many of these documents are primary sources and would be especially significant to historians. Digitizing these items and making them available via the internet would provide world-wide access to this exceptional collection. Because the documents are published by the Federal Government they are not bound by copyright rules.

For the project, how much, how many, of what will be digitized?

33 linear feet of the publications of the Commission
477 hearings concerning the Panama Canal
237 documents concerning the Panama Canal in the Serial Set
30 committee prints concerning the Panama Canal
Approximately 900 general publications concerning the Panama Canal published before 1976 (using Monthly Catalog)
196 cataloged Federal Documents concerning the Panama Canal - published after 1976

Type of material: book sand some pamphlets

Type of content: black and white and some color
Size: Mostly standard book size, some pamphlets

Uniqueness: Uniqueness will be bringing the material together in one collection

Condition: Some brittle documents (under 5%)

Copyright status: out of copyright

Metadata available (catalog record, spreadsheet, none, etc.). Is there a title, author, and date for each item? If not, is there a finding guide with this information?

There are cataloging records available for the vast majority of the publications. However, only 10% of the collection has been cataloged and no list has been created.

How will users interact with the end product?

This collection will be available to users via the internet. The platform has not been determined but most likely via UF Digital Collections. The primary intent of this project will be providing access to the Federal documents housed in the Documents Department relating to the Panama Canal.

In answering this, please explain if this is primarily for access, or is this about preserving rare or delicate materials (users will now be able to “handle” them more with the zoom technology?) and/or is this about something extending from the digital materials (data mining, etc)?

The primary intent of this project will be providing access to the Federal documents housed in the Documents Department relating to the Panama Canal.

Does the material benefit from being digitized within a digital collection to create something new (information in context, mapped, in motion, data mining, new research...)? No

How does this collection enhance existing library collections, departments or research at UF?

This collection brings together primary and general government publications relating to the Panama Canal. These documents are not cataloged and access is via printed indexes. This will greatly enhance researchers’ ability to identify and access this collection of great historical significance.

Who is the audience for this digital project?
The audience would be any person who is interested in the Panama Canal and who has access to the internet.

Which departments, colleges, and particular researchers at UF and in the state of Florida?

This collection will have particular significance to researchers in the history department. The general publications would be of interest of a wide array of researchers on campus.

Is the material already digitized and online? What other libraries or groups may be digitizing it or in partnering (local museums, public libraries, publishers, community groups)?

Some of this material has been digitized as parts of collected papers of individuals connected to the Panama Canal such as the A.B Nichols Collection at Linda Hall Library but there is no collection of digitized Federal documents relating to the Panama Canal.

What impact will digitization have on your daily workload and on other units?

The impact of preparing this collection for digitization would be significant. The retrieval of the 900 documents would be labor intensive, involving the consultation of two separate indexes to identify the Superintendent of Documents classification number. The retrieval of the hearings and serial set items would be less cumbersome since a list with Superintendent of Documents numbers has already been produced. The Documents would then be evaluated to determine whether or not they merit digitization.

The final step and the one involving the most staff time would be cataloging the documents because Internet Archive requires a bibliographic record. It is estimated that this part of the project would take 300 hours. (1,500 items cataloged at a rate of 5 per hour)

For sustainability, future grant development, patron and partner assistance, and all of the digital collection management requirements, are you able to commit resources, both for initial creation and for ongoing maintenance and support?

The Libraries have entered into a partnership with the Panama Canal Society which includes a commitment for ongoing maintenance and support.