

INTRODUCTION

DHC Symposium Proceedings

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Thanks to continued generous funding from the Mellon Foundation, the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) has guided its “hidden collections” initiatives through several iterations, beginning with Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives (CHC, 2008–2014), followed by Digitizing Hidden Special Collections and Archives (DHC, 2015–2020), and now continuing with Digitizing Hidden Collections: Amplifying Unheard Voices (DHC:AUV, 2021–present). Many have contributed to these programs as applicants, reviewers, and program officers, and these contributions have been instrumental in helping CLIR’s regranting activities evolve to become responsive and forward-facing.

Opportunities to meet in person to share, reflect on, and celebrate accomplishments have created significant milestones along the path toward a clear and currently relevant mission. An early **symposium for CHC recipients took place in Washington, DC, in 2010**, followed by another **in Philadelphia, PA, in 2015**. Participants shared information and lessons from their various cataloging projects and learned from one other in facilitative and supportive environments. A third Digitizing Hidden Collections Symposium—designed to mark the culmination of the 2015–2020 DHC program—was scheduled for 2020 but postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, an online event, **Celebrating Five Years of Digitizing Hidden Collections**, was held in 2020. Similar to the previous in-person gatherings, the 2020 program was designed to help DHC recipients share information and skills while cultivating a supportive professional community of practice for those working to create access to rare and unique collections.

As pandemic conditions eased and people became more comfortable being in public, the in-person DHC event was rescheduled: the **2022 Digitizing Hidden Collections Symposium** took place in Baltimore, Maryland, on October 12–13, 2022. The event centered on the theme “We digitized it—what’s next? Learning from and making use of digitized hidden collections.”

CLIR invited those who had participated in the DHC program’s 100 funded projects to build on their collective experiences, forge new connections, and present their work. The event created opportunities for both presenters and attendees to reflect on the current state and future potential of digitization practice in collecting institutions, including how the digital cultural record can better reflect the diversity of human thought and experience, how law and ethics affect strategies for access, and how technologies and standards can improve discovery and learning.

These were ambitious goals, but the 2022 symposium’s program lived up to the challenge, thanks in part to the extensive range of collections and session topics and to the wide range of contributors—from principal investigators, staff, and community collaborators working on

projects to other interested parties, such as digital library professionals, researchers, cultural heritage practitioners, and students. While attendees came from a variety of professional backgrounds, their common experience with CLIR's regranting program helped them build rapport with one another during the two-day event.

The program comprised 18 live sessions, including an opening keynote, 45-minute panels and demonstrations, a poster session, groups of 15-minute papers, and a closing panel discussion involving presenters representing three funded projects. Attendees were also invited to contribute demonstration videos representing lessons learned from their work, and teams representing three projects submitted short videos to mark the occasion. Participants in the symposium included 136 registrants, 51 of whom contributed presentations. Presenters represented 23 unique DHC projects.

This Proceedings document begins with the text of the keynote by Dr. Michelle Caswell, followed by seven papers, representing a sampling of the symposium presentations, and ending with an afterword by CLIR Program Officer Sharon M. Burney. An appendix lists all Symposium content and those who presented and contributed. Further information about and resources for all Symposium submissions can be found at <https://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/learning-from-and-making-use-of-digitized-hidden-collections>.

The committee that planned the DHC symposium sought to build upon the momentum and scaffolding built through the previous symposia and to focus on human-centered, ethical, and real-world impacts of cultural heritage digitization. The 2019 global pandemic and its social, technological, and political disruptions have underlined the need for a shared, full, and accurate understanding of human history. This shared understanding is necessary in order to inform both national policies and everyday perspectives on the ways people should care for one another. Content that reflects the breadth of human experience and that honestly reckons with past and present harms can play a vital role in weaving together a stronger social fabric as we move together toward an uncertain future.

More and more, custodians of cultural heritage are recognizing the significance of proactive digitization and the need to directly impact local communities even while using digital technologies to facilitate a broader global reach. The closing plenary exemplified this imperative to prepare simultaneously to make local and global impacts. Entitled "Real World Ripples: Current Events and Digital Collection," the panel discussed three projects that represented institutions and collections from the Global South, Russia, and the incarcerated in the United States. The panel engaged in a spirited and genuine conversation around intentional and authentic partnerships, as well as connections to local communities and generating positive change through work with scientific and cultural heritage. The symposium concluded with a call to action to celebrate the labor required to build and maintain digital collections, a reminder to lean on each other through challenging times, and an invitation for cultural heritage workers to continue their work while striving to do better for the better of everyone.