

Adam Matthew Digital: A Digital Publication Vendor and Special Collection Libraries
Amelia Ishmael
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Faced with increasing pressure to evidence researchers' interest in rare book and special collection libraries, many recent job postings are looking to invest in "digital asset managers" and "digital initiatives librarians" who might expand their collection to the digital world, and thus increase users' access and interest in valuable (yet possibly neglected) collections. This trend comes, in part, due to an increasing demand by the public, since the advent of Google for libraries and museums to digitalize their entire collection and make it available online.¹ Although special collection libraries want to provide researchers with expanded access opportunities, they must also protect the physical vulnerabilities and intellectual copyright of their collections; A conflict of interest arise which makes scanning and uploading images of their collection online irresponsible. Additionally, the implementation of a digital collection and exhibition program demands an expense of staff and resources that many libraries simply do not have access to.

One of the solutions to this problem has been ameliorated by the commercial publisher Adam Matthew Digital. Founded in 1990, Adam Matthew Digital started out with a focus on microfilm collections and CD-ROM publishing and expanded into publishing online resources in the early 2000s. With a selective curatorial oversight, Adam Matthew Digital has been working with the world's leading libraries and research centers to digitalize collections in emerging multi-disciplinary research areas such as Gender and Sexuality, Cultural Studies, and Empire and Globalism. In 2012, Adam Matthew Digital was acquired by SAGE Publications, and has since become a leading academic publisher of electronic collections from international libraries'

¹ See Video: *Google and the World Brain* (BBC, 2013), http://vufind.carli.illinois.edu/vf-uiu/Record/uiu_7419245

primary-resource collections. The publisher creates databases or “packages” which academic institutions and research libraries can purchase subscriptions to.

One of Adam Matthew Digital’s leading advantages is that it provides the initial funding for the digitalization of the library’s materials and invites the library that they are working with to have oversight of the digitalization process. The special collections library has the liberty to select an external digitalization vendor to be used, all scanning is done on-site, and the digitalization staff is trained to adhere to library’s best-handling practices—thereby overcoming the immediate concerns from the special collections library that the digitalization process might damage their collection. When the entire collection is scanned, Adam Matthew Digital creates a robust online database that is immediately available (onsite) to the staff and researchers of the special collections library, and to researchers offsite whose institutions have purchased or subscribed to the database.² Additionally, Adam Matthew Digital creates a comprehensive marketing package that places the newly digitalized and searchable collections in front of the eyes of researchers, through attractive flyers, article placements in leading academic and library periodicals.

Aware of the value of serving the needs of academic researchers, Adam Matthew Digital provides additional technological capabilities that enhance the collections’ discoverability and use—including handwritten-text recognition (HTR) for manuscript collections, optical character recognition (OCR), digital preservation of digital collections, and data mining. Individual documents are also provided with comprehensive metadata, and Adam Matthews Digital partners with federated-search platforms such as Ex Libris, ProQuest, Ebsco, and OCLC in order to

² These details were gleaned through an interview with Sidney Berger, who worked directly with Adam Matthew Digital while employed at The Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, May 15, 2019.

enhance discoverability.³ These technologies and partnerships are part of Adam Matthew Digital's service, and enable the vendor to transform an institution's potentially under-recognized and under-used collection into an accessible, searchable, and connected resource. Reviews of their services are consistently celebrative. For example, in 2009 Adam Matthew Digital created a database of The Newberry Library's *American West* collection, which includes over 300 original manuscripts, 120 maps, ephemera, manuscripts, journals, illustrations, and more, spanning 1722 to 1939.⁴ The entire American West package, at the time of its release, had a one-time cost of \$41,000 for a file that the customer would acquire from the publisher. In a review for *Library Journal* the release received a glowing review "The content is a ten. The design is a ten. The delivery is, you guessed it, a ten."⁵

The physical handling, technical services, and marketing of the packages' release is only one part of Andrew Matthew Digital's service. What about the intellectual copyright? As an immediate effect of researchers' increased access to valuable collections one can surely anticipate an increased interest in requests for copyright permissions for researchers' publications. Who owns the digital images after publication? When Adam Matthew Digital establishes a new relationship with a library, it engages in a contractual period that is negotiated between the vendor and the library. The whole process takes multiple years, and the contract binds the library to the publisher in a number of ways that allows the publisher to recupere its initially invested expenses, and to create profits for both the publisher itself and the special

³ Adam Matthew Digital, <https://www.amdigital.co.uk>

⁴ *American West: Sources from the Everett D. Graff collection at the Newberry Library, Chicago*, <http://www.americanwest.amdigital.co.uk.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/?SessionExpired=True>

⁵ Cheryl LaGuardia, "Review: The American West: Sources From the Everett D. Graff Collection at the Newberry Library, Chicago," *Library Journal* 134.10 (June 1, 2009), 124.

collections library. These profits are gleaned from the subscription and digital-image copyright costs.

In the case of Sidney Berger's work with Adam Matthew Digital, while at The Phillips Library, a contract was described to define how the library and publisher would distribute profits for the five years following publication of the database package. For the first five years Adam Matthew Digital received the majority of the profits from subscription packages and five years of publishing through digital subscriptions and purchases. During this time Adam Matthew Digital gained 90% of the digital-image copyrights, and The Phillips Library was able to enjoy digital copyright to only 10% of the digitalized collection. Although this might seem like at first appear like a small advantage, the profits from this package's release resulted in an astounding \$.25 million profits to The Phillips Library. The quantity of this profit is evidence of Adam Matthew Digital's effective marketing and services, and the inherent value of the collection itself which was previously considered intellectually valuable but perhaps monetarily unprofitable.

After the initial 5-year contractual period has passed, 100% of the image copyrights are returned to the special collections library, and the library is also given a choice to either regain complete ownership of the new collection database or to establish an extended contract with Adam Matthew Digital.⁶ The results of the relationship are clearly beneficial for both the publisher and the library, as the vendor is financially motivated to must attract researchers' interest in order to recoup its investing costs, and the library receives an abundance of new attention and public relations (that will endure beyond the five-year contract) as the world suddenly becomes aware of the previously unknown collection.

⁶ Interview with Sidney Berger, May 15, 2019.

In addition to providing digital exhibitions for individual collections, such as Newberry Library's American West collection, Adam Matthew Digital also creates curated "Products" that exhibit networks of primary resources across multiple institutions—such as their African American Communities product which features items from the Atlanta History Center, Richard J. Daley Library (University of Illinois at Chicago), Southern Historical Collection (Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), The Newberry Library, and Weeksville Heritage Center—in order to provide multiple perspectives on broad issues that one collection alone could not satiate.

Adam Matthew Digital continues to develop as a leading publisher of primary-resource collections. Recently, the November 15, 2018 issue of *Library Journal* announced that Adam Matthew Digital has released the debut of Quartex, a Software as a Service (SaaS) product that is described as "a digital asset management solution designed to help libraries showcase archival collections."⁷

I have chosen to study this issue now because I am concerned about the future of special collections libraries, and curious how digital preservation (which I am currently taking a course in) will impact the field. In further research, I hope to study the long-term effects that Adam Matthew Digital's packages have on the variety of libraries that it has worked with. One of the greatest hurdles that special collections libraries currently face is the lack of staff and funding to maintain digital collections. Thus, I assume that very few libraries have the resources and staff to independently administer their digital packages after the initial contractual period has passed. If this is true, I am curious to learn: what are the short-term and long-term effects of their reliance on their publisher? Does researchers' and the academic subscribers' interests in the collections

⁷ Matt Enis, "Adam Matthew Debuts Quartex," *Library Journal* (November 15, 2018), 8-11.

continue after Adam Matthew Digital's initial marketing campaign? Who are Adam Matthew Digital's competitors in this market, and what are the sorts of relationships and services that they offer to special collections libraries?

Some Proposed Future Reading List:

Matt Enis, "Adam Matthew's Text Recognition," *Library Journal*, 142.19 (November 15, 2017), 14-15.

Tom Gilson and Katina Strauch, "ATG Interviews Karen Phillips, Vice President, SAGE and Khal Rudin, Director, Adam Matthew," *Against the Grain*, 25.2 (April 2013), 50-53.

R. Junus, "Digital collections and accessibility," *DSC Sandbox blog*.

<http://spartanideas.msu.edu/2014/12/13/digital-collections-and-accessibility/>

M. Lesk, "A personal history of digital libraries," *Library Hi Tech*, 30.4 (2012): 592-603.

Brian Lavoie, "13 Ways of Looking at Digital Preservation". 2004. D-Lib Magazine.

Brain Lavoie, *The Incentives to Preserve Digital Materials: Roles, Scenarios, and Economic Decision-Making*, (OCLC Online Computer Library Center, Inc., Office of Research, 2003), <http://www.oclc.org/research/projects/digipres/incentives-dp.pdf>

R.L. Punzalan, "Understanding virtual reunification," *Library Quarterly* 84.3 (2014): 294-323.]

A. Roberts, "Conceptualising the library collection for the digital world," in *Digital Information Strategies: From Applications and Content to Libraries and People* (Waltham, MA: Chandos Publishing, 2016), 143-156.

Eileen Scully, "Thematic Digital History Archives and Their Wicked Problems: China, America and the Pacific," *The American Historical Review*, 122.1 (1 February 2017), 115-122.