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Special Issue on Special Collections and Archives in the Digital Age

The ARL Working Group on Transforming Special Collections in the Digital Age is focusing on a range of issues including the realignment and mainstreaming of special collections functions in ARL libraries, indicators for the strengths of special collections, and development of skills in the areas of digital and data curation. Other issues for the working group are legal concerns and evolving professional practices around digitizing special collections and archival materials.

This issue of *RLI* addresses the latter two issues. ARL member libraries have embraced digitization—performed in-house or through commercial vendors—as a critical strategy to increase access to their unique collections. In their introduction to this special issue, Peter B. Hirtle, Anne R. Kenney, and Judy Ruttenberg highlight the ongoing commitment to increasing exposure, access, and discovery of archival and manuscript material in the research mainstream, reaching undergraduates to senior scholars. Access to digitized archival material has dramatically changed the way research can be done. This change has challenged libraries and special collections librarians and curators to consider evolving professional practices and legal obligations. Also in this issue is a model digitization contract for use with outside vendors, as well as model “deeds of gift” that can secure permission from rights holders to make donated material accessible on the web. Finally, Kevin L. Smith, Director of Scholarly Communications at Duke University, presents a critical essay on a new way of thinking about copyright and risk management in digitizing special collections.

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