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Top Tips for Digitisation: In-House vs. Outsourced

Digitisation
IN-HOUSE VS. OUTSOURCED

With Signal Film and Media & Sutton Cultural Services

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Following very separate projects and journeys, our blog post **Inhouse vs. Outsourcing Your Digitisation Project - What's the Pros and Cons?** shone a light on the two main options for digitising material - inhouse or outsourcing - as experienced firsthand by Abby Matthews, Archive and Family History Centre Manager at **Sutton Cultural Services** and Julia Parks, Project Manager at **Signal Film and Media**.

It is clear there is overlap in some areas, specifically how both approaches can make use of volunteers in order to benefit the community and each have their own related costs and demands, as well as compromises - whether that be time, money or training - but both equally demonstrate that it is possible to achieve your project goals by whichever means suits you, your budget and your resources best.

There was much information and advice to share, so Abby and Julia kindly agreed to produce this quick reference resource for those weighing up their digitisation options. With thanks to Abby and Julia for their significant contribution, kindly supporting others in the heritage industry, and we hope you find this resource a valuable tool in the decision making process.

IN-HOUSE DIGITISATION
Sutton Cultural Services

Abby's Top Tips - Inhouse Digitisation

1. Do your research. Speak to as many colleagues as you can who have worked with similar collection materials. There is a wealth of conflicting advice available.

2. Use the limitations of your own project to inform your approach. The choice of options can be overwhelming, but having your choices curtailed by cost/capacity or other factors can actually be helpful in narrowing your approach.

3. Be creative in your approach. We worked with universities, offering students the opportunity to develop specialist skills in exchange for helping to conserve our collection for digitisation, which really helped to stretch our budget.

4. Think about standards and automate everything you can. If you can run a small pilot first, do it. It can be hard to think of everything when you start, and it is only when you have worked through a set of material that issues become obvious.

5. Identify strengths and weaknesses in your team and use them to your advantage. Not everyone is good at everything. Put workflows and checks in place at every stage to ensure issues and mistakes are caught.

OUTSOURCED DIGITISATION
Signal Film & Media

Julia's Top Tips - Outsourcing Digitisation

1. Be clear about what you need digitised, file sizes and information that needs to be collected.

2. Get a number of image samples before embarking on full scale digitisation.

3. Identify the strengths and weaknesses in your team - both with staff members and volunteers working on the project.

4. Be willing to adapt and learn as new challenges arise. Our project has taken place throughout a pandemic and has not turned out exactly as we first planned!

5. Collaborate with others to build knowledge - Signal has many skills but it is the local volunteers who have brought the images to life through their knowledge of the local area.

Should you wish to discuss the outsourcing of your own digitisation process then do **get in touch**, our expert digitisation consultants will be happy to answer your questions.