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Adventures in Digitization: A New Librarian Shares Five Hard Earned Tips to Avoid Project Management Pitfalls

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ADVENTURES IN DIGITIZATION:

A new librarian shares five hard-earned tips to avoid project management pitfalls

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ABSTRACT

Many institutions are feeling pressure to embark on digitization projects to provide greater access and visibility to their unique materials. Digitization initiatives have numerous benefits, but they can also drain staff time and resources if they are not planned and prioritized well. As new librarians are hired into increasingly technical entry-level positions, they are often expected to contribute to or lead digitization projects requiring a diverse skill set. Learn five key tips to help recent grads and new digital project managers to avoid pitfalls. Topics include: the importance of the planning process, involving key people at the right time, never underestimating the challenges of metadata, learning to love the tools at hand (the CONTENTdm digital media management system is highlighted), and successfully launching a completed project.

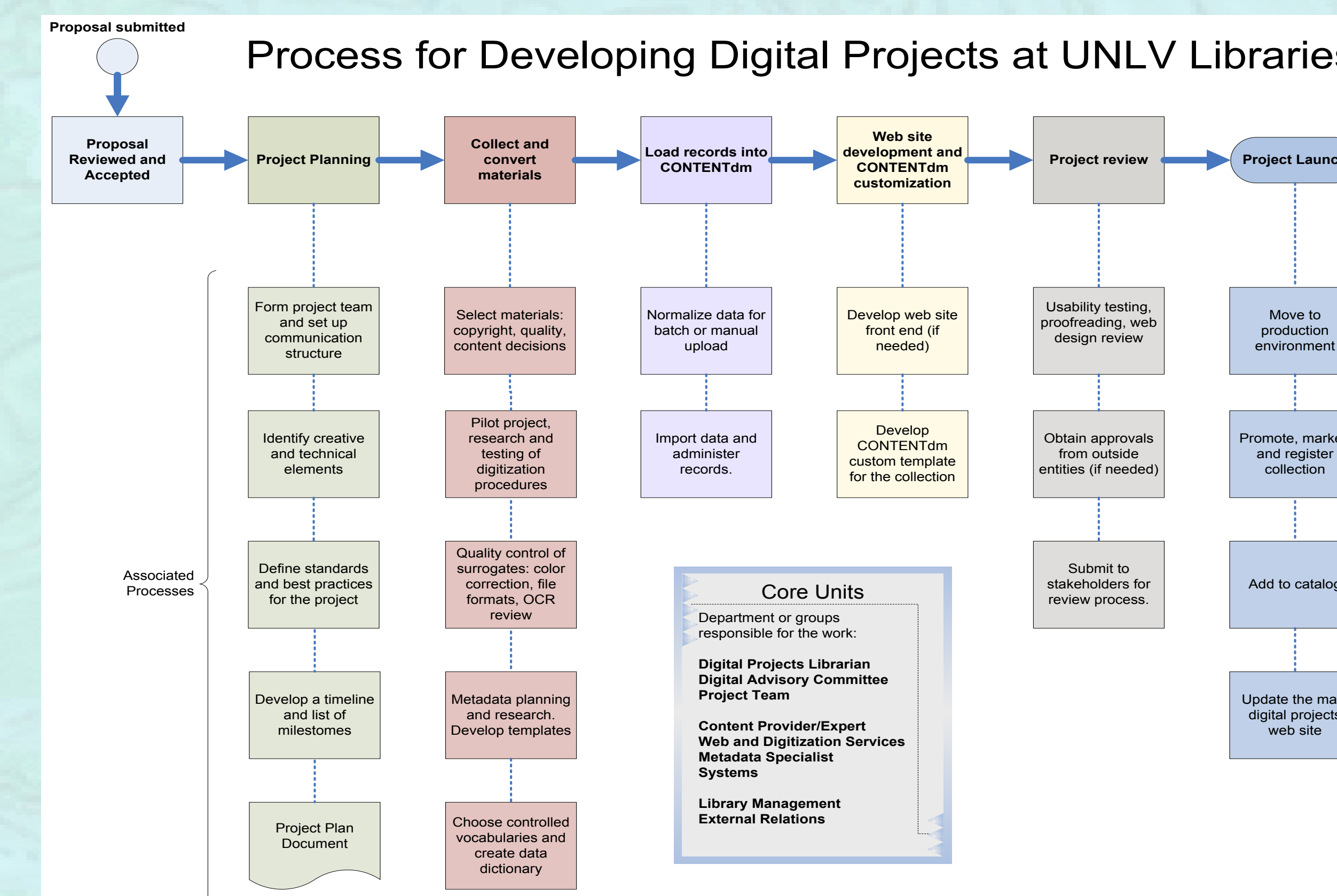
MISSION:
YOU'VE BEEN ASKED TO WORK ON A DIGITAL PROJECT.
WHERE DO YOU BEGIN?

STRATEGY: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS ARE STILL THE MOST IMPORTANT TOOL OF THE TRADE

- ◆ COMMUNICATION STYLES CAN DIFFER BETWEEN LIBRARIANS AND IT PROFESSIONALS
- ◆ POLITICS BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS (IN LIBRARY, ON CAMPUS, WITH REGIONAL PARTNERS)
- ◆ JOB IS MORE THAN TECHNOLOGY SKILLS: PRESENTING TO GROUPS, WRITING PROJECT PLANS, AUTHORIZING GRANTS
- ◆ COMMUNICATE ENTHUSIASM AND BE AN ADVOCATE, BUT KNOW WHEN TO SAY NO.
- ◆ AS DIGITAL COLLECTIONS BECOME MORE COMMON, MORE RESOURCES ARE BEING ALLOTTED. EXPECT TO BE ASKED WHAT YOU DO AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT
- ◆ MAKE SURE CONVERSATIONS GO IN TWO DIRECTIONS. LISTEN AND RESPOND.

STRATEGY: MARSHAL RESOURCES INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY

- ◆ BOTH PROGRAM PLANNING AND PROJECT PLANNING
- ◆ IDENTIFY KEY PEOPLE AND THEIR ROLES



STRATEGY: ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS AND TAP THE COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE BASE

- ◆ 6 BASIC QUESTIONS FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS:
 - ⇒ RIGHTS
 - ⇒ CONTENT
 - ⇒ USER/AUDIENCE
 - ⇒ RESOURCES
 - ⇒ IMPACT
 - ⇒ LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY
- ◆ SEEK OUT STANDARDS, BUT REMEMBER THAT "BEST PRACTICES" ARE SOME ONE ELSE'S THOUGHTFUL DECISIONS. BE WILLING TO ADAPT LOCALLY
- ◆ EVERY INSTITUTION HAS THEIR OWN UNIQUE MATERIALS, UNIQUE CHALLENGES
- ◆ USE TOOLS TO STAY CURRENT: LISTSERVS, RSS FEEDS, CONFERENCES, INFORMAL PHONE CALLS AND E-MAILS, PUBLICATIONS, ETC.

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DIGITAL COLLECTIONS:
[HTTP://WWW.LIBRARY.UNLV.EDU/EXHIBITS/INDEX.HTML](http://www.library.unlv.edu/exhibits/index.html)

TIP 1:
EXUBERANCE AT THE ONSET IS A SIGN THAT YOU ARE GOING TO NEED A THOUGHTFUL PLAN.

✗ PITFALL TO AVOID: NEGLECT PLANNING AND IT WILL COME BACK TO HAUNT YOU THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT AS YOU REDO WORK, CONFUSION SNOWBALLS AND STAFF LOSES STEAM.

TIP 3:
SO WHAT IF YOU DIDN'T SIGN ON AS A CATALOGER? METADATA IS STILL GOING TO CONSUME YOUR WAKING LIFE. YES, IT IS IMPORTANT.

✗ PITFALL TO AVOID: CARELESS METADATA EQUALS SLOPPY SEARCH RESULTS. THE END OF THE PROJECT IS NOT THE BEST TIME TO START THINKING ABOUT THE USER'S SEARCH STRATEGY. TALK TO CONTENT EXPERTS, CATALOGERS/METADATA EXPERTS AND WEB DESIGNERS EARLY.

TIP 5:
THE PROJECT NEEDS TO END IN YOUR LIFETIME. EVALUATE, MAKE CHANGES, AND THEN SHARE THE SUCCESS. MARKET THE NEW COLLECTION AND REMEMBER THAT THERE IS ALWAYS TIME FOR PHASE 2.

✗ PITFALL TO AVOID: IF YOU DON'T LEARN, YOU ARE DOOMED TO REPEAT. BE BRAVE ENOUGH TO EVALUATE THE PROCESS. PROJECTS CAN'T BE PERFECT AND AREN'T EVER COMPLETE. DIGITIZATION IS AN ON-GOING ADVENTURE!

TIP 2:
COLLABORATION MEANS THAT YOU WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO WORK WITH SOMEONE DIFFICULT ALONG THE WAY- TALK TO KEY PEOPLE EARLY ON IN THE PROCESS.

✗ PITFALL TO AVOID: DON'T OVER COMMIT (KNOW THYSELF!) AND REALIZE DIFFERENCES IN CULTURES EXIST.

GOALS FOR THE FUTURE:

- ◆ UNLV is committed to exploring collaborations and partnerships to increase access to unique materials.
- ◆ UNLV is committed to creating long-term shareable and reusable digital objects.
- ◆ UNLV's digitization program will continue to mature in the coming years.

TIP 4:
THERE IS NO PERFECT SYSTEM. IF YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OVERSEEING THE RECORDS (IN SAY, CONTENTDM), UNDERSTAND AND ADVOCATE FOR WHAT YOU'VE GOT.

✗ PITFALL TO AVOID: TO KNOW THE SYSTEM IS TO LOVE THE SYSTEM. ONE PERSON NEEDS TO OVERSEE AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY, OTHERWISE PROJECTS LANGUISH IN VAGUE TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES.