

What is DPLA?

The mission of the Digital Public Library of America is “to bring together the riches of America’s libraries, archives, and museums, and make them freely available to all.” DPLA offers a single interface for searching digital content available from sources throughout the United States.

The vision of DPLA is to offer “the full breadth of human expression, from the written word, to works of art.” This broad scope also allows for librarians, curators, and exhibitors to make connections and cross-references across these different types of materials and the incredible variety of subjects.

Libraries, particularly, understand the value of metadata, and DPLA shares that perspective; its repository aggregates metadata from digital libraries across the United States, which is achieved through regional hubs. The regional hubs aggregate the metadata of digital libraries in their region, standardize it, and then pass it on in a single stream to DPLA. Because there is no single metadata standard, this regional work is essential to the efficient and consistent collection of information by DPLA.

For the public, especially researchers, the diffusion of primary sources and physical locations of collections has always been an obstacle. Another key benefit of DPLA is that it offers a single point of entry to search for content that has been digitized by libraries, research institutions, and cultural heritage organizations across the United States.

DPLA does not house the digital objects; instead, it links to each item, sending users directly to the home institution where the material resides. This provides three benefits:

- DPLA can focus on metadata in its database and provide sensible links between resources using different metadata schemas. Their focus is robustness and interoperability of the metadata for these aggregated collections.
- DPLA does not expend effort on maintaining and preserving these digital objects.
- The home institution receives the users coming to their website and benefits from the traffic, with access to the specific pageviews and time spent on the website as well as the opportunity to engage the user with other material.

DPLA’s history and background

The first discussions that led to DPLA occurred in December 2010. The process of organizing an institution, standing up the database, and bringing partners on board was accomplished quickly. In the spring of 2013, the DPLA went live to the public and has continued to grow from that initial release.

DPLA has over 48 million objects referenced in its database and service hubs from around the country. Major partners and content contributors include HathiTrust, Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, and the Internet Archive.

What is Heartland Hub?

DPLA’s model requires a regional service hub. Founded in 2014 as MissouriHub, Heartland Hub revised its bylaws and admitted contributing partners from Iowa in 2022. The Hub aggregates and regularizes

metadata from member institutions and passes it on to DPLA. The Hub also offers training events and is a forum for strengthening a community of practice around digitization in the region.

Who will benefit?

The organizations that submit their metadata to the content hub benefit by increased use of their material and higher visibility of their digital objects. In turn, this access benefits the organization, as their work is made more visible and the benefits are broadcast to a larger audience. In addition, the public benefits: Anyone who accesses the site from anywhere in the world would be provided with another portal into the wide array of digitized content created by our libraries.

What does it mean that metadata imported into the DPLA is provided under CC0?

The DPLA partnership agreement stipulates that your organization grant the DPLA permission to release the metadata you submit under [CC0](#)—a Creative Commons license that dedicates a work to the public domain. This means that downstream users are free to use, harvest, collect, and modify any metadata contained in the DPLA unencumbered by restrictions of copyright law. This is unexceptional because the vast majority of metadata is not subject to copyright in the first place, even if digital objects it describes are protected.

It may be the case that the aggregated records you provide contain metadata collected from a third-party institution or database (for example, if you hosted collections for another institution). The language in any original agreement to host third party metadata would need to be reviewed to determine whether DPLA's standard agreement could be used.

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