

Digitisation Services

Open up your collection



The British Library

As the UK's national library we provide access to one of the world's most comprehensive research collections.

We care for over 170 million items from newspapers to sound recordings, patents, prints and drawings, maps, manuscripts and books. This collection of printed and digital publications grows by millions each year.

With a mission to make our intellectual heritage available to everyone for research, inspiration and enjoyment, we are transforming digital access to our heritage materials and helping unlock their stories. Digitisation is the key to making this happen and, with our expertise in digitising some of history's most significant items, we can help you do the same.





Why should you digitise?

Increase access

Digitised content removes physical access barriers. With endless possibilities to share your collection online via portals, catalogues and across networks, you can integrate your digitised records with existing systems to improve efficiency in your organisation. Make old formats visible again and give them a new lease of life.

Reach new audiences

Raise awareness and let other people discover your collection on a global or local scale. Open your archives to people who have never seen them before, engaging new audiences and inspiring new creative and research projects.

Create opportunities for income generation

Add value to your current business proposition by creating new material for your customers, opening

new revenue streams and opportunities for income generation.

Fill the gaps in your collection

We can provide the items missing from your archive or back-catalogue and digitise them for you. Enrich your collection by finishing their stories.

Preserve your collection

Viewing digital images instead of handling originals will help to protect them. Digitisation can also help businesses and heritage organisations with disaster recovery plans, protecting your collection's legacy from physical damage.

Inspire others

Digitising can unlock the stories hidden in your collection or brand heritage. Why not inspire a new generation to revisit history and take the story forward?

Why digitise with the British Library?

We digitised Magna Carta.
Put your collection in safe hands.

The British Library has been at the forefront of digitisation and digital preservation for over 20 years. We look after some of the nation's most important historical items, and have extensive experience in handling rare, fragile and heritage material, as well as material of cultural significance spanning 3,000 years.

Preserving history and making knowledge accessible is what we do best. Our expert teams of curators, technicians, imaging specialists and conservators can guide you every step of the way. We will manage your project from start to finish: from scoping and estimating costs all the way through to final delivery, in the most appropriate format for your items. We're experienced in handling and digitising all formats and have a range of cutting-edge equipment to help you find the best solution for your unique collection and heritage items.





What we offer

The British Library has multiple digitisation studios, a wide range of state-of-the-art equipment and a team of over 30 digitisation specialists, giving us the capacity to handle projects and collection items of all sizes. Access to our studios is restricted and secure. Our holistic approach aims to find the right solution for your needs, whether that's end-to-end support, or assistance with specific stages in the process.

Our services:

- Project scoping and estimating to help you plan and secure funding
- Creation of digital images from all types of media including: 35mm slides, artwork, books, films, catalogues, documents, drawings, film, glass plates, journals, loose sheets, manuscripts, maps, medical records, newspapers, plans, photographs, theses, wide formats and more
- Physical storage and document disposal
- Post processing including Optical Character Recognition (OCR)
- Large-format glossy poster and plan printing
- Microfilm and microfiche scanning
- Location photography at the site of your items
- Digital content such as 3D photography, timelapse video, 360-degree images and virtual tours
- Multispectral and Reflectance Transformation Imaging
- Advice and support in the transportation of your collection to our studios
- Conservation advice for heritage items.

Our team would be happy to provide you with more information on any of our services.

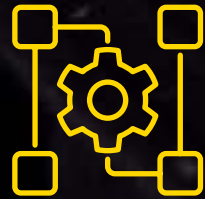
What's involved?

Every digitisation project is unique but there are some important steps that feature in every project, helping to deliver the best results.



Project scoping

We take time to understand your requirements. We assess your collection, provide costs to help you secure funding, estimate timescales, select the right equipment and recommend any preparation or post-production processes.



Project planning

We work with you to plan out every stage of the process. From creating a manifest and agreeing the retrieval or receiving process, all the way up to understanding final image usage and establishing an appropriate output format.



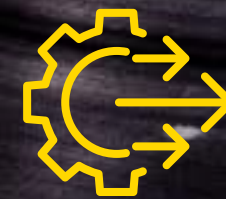
Preparation

We create your project documentation, securely receive collection items, and consult with our subject experts. We stick to British Library standards throughout this process, ensuring that you and your collection are in safe hands.



Digitising and image capture

Our team of digitisation specialists, working from our conservation-approved studios, will carefully produce digital images. We provide a secure, climate controlled environment, and use equipment specifically tailored to each project.



Post-processing

Quality-control checks are carried out on the final output to ensure that they meet the Library's high standards. We also offer Optical Character Recognition (OCR) for your digitised collection. This converts images of text into editable, extractable and searchable files.



Final delivery

Your digitised images will be sent to you in your chosen format, and items will be returned safely and securely.

Who we have worked with

We've worked with a wide variety of clients, both in the UK and overseas. From renowned educational institutions to personal collections, here are just a few among those who have trusted us:

Amnesty International
The National Archives
University of Cambridge
Find My Past
British Museum
Wallace Collection
Clifford Chance LLP
Imperial War Museum
Malmesbury Abbey
Warner Bros
The National Trust
Proquest
The Tolkien Society
National Library Board, Singapore
Educo (Ferrovial)
Gale Cengage

Our work has included digitising:

Magna Carta
King George III's Topographical Collection, including the Klenke Atlas
3D Imaging for the African & Asian Studies Department
Captain James Cook's diaries
British and French Illuminated Manuscripts, in partnership with Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Polonsky Foundation
Newspapers and journals from the British Newspaper Archive
Manuscripts and other historical items that inspired J K Rowling
Javanese palm leaf manuscripts
Tudor and early Stuart manuscripts



What our clients say

"We needed a supplier who could deliver us a high-quality economic project. The British Library have backed up their reputation with a quality service."

Richard Kidd

Royal Society of Chemistry

"The hard drive with your images has arrived and the image quality is simply mind-blowing! You really are getting it right and I am very happy to be able to work with this material."

Dr Nikolaus Weichselbaumer

University of Mainz





Our services

Specialist scanning services

Digitise content from one-off scans to large-scale mass digitisation formats, using our state-of-the-art equipment.

Output

Digitised content from a range of source material, including: Microfilm, microfiche (including jackets, COM, step-and-repeat and aperture cards), photographic transparency and negative film and glass lantern slides.

Process

Upon receiving your collection, we will assess your needs and embark on full production. We will catalogue and name your digital files according to your requirements and deliver them either electronically or on a hard drive.

Benefits

Using our specialist scanning services, we can transform inaccessible collections into easily-shareable digital formats.

Advanced imaging

Discover what's invisible to the naked eye.

Output

Images of the layers below the surface of your items.

Process

An exploratory approach to assess whether there is a hidden layer of previous work underneath the current layer on 2D items. Using specialist photographic techniques in the London studio, our experts will identify if further multi-spectral work should be undertaken.

Benefits

Identifies which of your items are suitable for further scientific imaging work, such as Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI).

3D imaging

Create multi-dimensional images of your items, and view them as never before.

Output

An interactive or printable 3D model of your item(s).

Process

In our London studio, technical experts will set up our specialist 3D rig. Multi-shot photography will then be processed using photogrammetry.

Benefits

Enhance the digital experience of your item by allowing it to be explored in multi-dimensional form. Preserve the original item while at the same time, reveal details not seen to the naked eye. Open up a 3D experience of the item to audiences across the world.

Get in touch to discuss your requirements further.
businessdevelopment@bl.uk

Our services

Location photography

We will come to you, so delicate items can stay where they belong.

Output

High-quality images of your precious items, in the format required.

Process

A member of our team can travel to your chosen location to digitise your items. All our experienced photographers are qualified in handling heritage items and will work with you to find the best place and the most suitable equipment to digitise your items, delivering the highest-quality results.

Benefits

Our experts will be with you onsite throughout the process. No need to risk fragile, valuable or bulky items being transported.

Personal collections

Preserve your cherished items for future generations.

Output

Digitised, accessible versions of your precious items: family photos, diaries, letters and other important memorabilia.

Process

Deliver your personal collection to our studio and we will digitise your items, based off your specific needs and the condition of your items. We can also convert formats like negatives and slides.

Benefits

Preserve and share digital copies of your personal collection, allowing family and friends to access them at the click of a button. Rediscover previously unseen details thanks to high-quality images and zoom-in functionalities.

High-quality printing

Give digital photos, illustrations, maps and paintings a new lease of life.

Output

Your digital files, reproduced on top-quality paper or a range of canvas materials (including exhibition paper, satin photo paper and soft-grain etching cotton rag).

Process

After receiving your digital files, we use our large format art printer to produce high-spec physical prints. We then deliver these back to you (worldwide delivery available), either packaged flat or in protective tubes.

Benefits

Using our state-of-the-art printer, we can reproduce top quality archival reproductions of original artefacts. Our services are available across a wide range of sizes and formats.

Get in touch to discuss your requirements further.
businessdevelopment@bl.uk





Any questions?

What is included in the price?

Our pricing covers every project stage listed in our 'What's involved?' section. That means your quote will cover scoping, planning, preparation, capture, post-processing and delivery.

How long will my project take to fulfill?

The exact turnaround time will depend on the nature and scale of the project. We will confirm a timescale in the preparation stage, and this will be included in the agreement.

What information do I need to provide to scope a project?

To provide an accurate scope, we will need to know what you want to digitise, which digitisation method you require and how many collection items you have. We'll confirm the outputs required and how you want them to be delivered.

What are the technical requirements recommended for my digitisation needs?

We follow the Library's own recommended standards to ensure long-term preservation and exceptional image quality. However, we can work to the specifications that best suit your needs and offer project-specific guidance.

Will I own the rights to my digitised collection?

For material still under copyright, you will need permissions from the copyright holder to digitise and use the outputs. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have obtained these permissions.

Have another question?

Feel free to reach out to our knowledgeable team at businessdevelopment@bl.uk

Get in touch
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bl.uk/digitisation

